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The Dark Web

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THE UFC'S
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Tom Petty's Lost Years

Kurt Cobain's Secret Recordings

The Weeknd

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ON THE COVER The Weeknd photographed in New York on October 8th, 2015, by **Mark Seliger**.

Styling by Fatima B. Grooming by Reiva Cruze for Exclusive Artists Management. Jacket by Our Legacy.

"People tell me I'm changing the culture," says the Weeknd. Page 40

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EXCLUSIVE

THE ZOMBIES RETURN

Watch a three-part episode of our video series "The Encore," chronicling the rise, fall and resurgence of one of the best psychedelic acts of the Sixties – including interviews with founders Rod Argent and Colin Blunstone about their new album.



Mötley Crüe

LIST

THE HISTORY OF HAIR METAL

Our experts rank and tell the stories behind the 50 best LPs from the hair-metal craze of the Eighties – from Def Leppard to Mötley Crüe, Stryper to Dokken.



VIDEO

THE ART OF BOB DYLAN

Go behind the scenes with rock scholar Bob Egan and get the real stories of classic Dylan album covers like *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*.



Q&A

DAVE GAHAN STRETCHES OUT

The Depeche Mode frontman discusses *Angels & Ghosts*, his moody new LP with his collaborators Soulsavers – and drops some hints about what's next for his main band.

360 DEGREES OF COUNTRY!

Come to Rolling Stone Country for daily news, video and reviews on Nashville and beyond. Tim McGraw appears on our new video series, "Ram Report," to talk about his *Damn Country Music* album, persuading his daughter to sing with him on the LP, and why he's his own biggest critic when it comes to his vocals. Powered by Ram.

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McGraw

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The RS Interview

THERE WASN'T AN OBSERVATION by President Obama that didn't ring true for me, both as an American citizen and a citizen of the world ["Obama Takes on Climate Change: The Rolling Stone Interview," RS 1245]. Climate change is a daunting, depressing challenge, but we have the technologies to make positive changes for future generations.

Andre Schwægler, Basalt, CO

GREAT INTERVIEW BY JEFF Goodell, in which he held Obama's feet to the fire. The Clean Power Plan doesn't go far enough, but I'm glad the president is now taking formal steps to reduce planet-killing emissions.

Ray Rollins, via the Internet

AS OBAMA TALKED ABOUT carbon reduction and fossil fuels, I wondered why no one is addressing animal agriculture, the industry responsible for the largest percentage of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and the one responsible for the majority of rainforest destruction.

Stu Blee, Aurora, MN

OBAMA SOUNDS SERIOUS, but I'll reserve judgment until COP21 in December. Here's hoping he cements his climate legacy in Paris.

Daryl Ash, via the Internet

Stewart Can't Stop

For RS 1245, associate editor Andy Greene traveled to Las Vegas with Rod Stewart for a classic show at Caesars Palace ["Rod Stewart Still Has All the Luck"]. ROLLING STONE readers and Stewart fans wrote in to comment.

IT'S BEEN 50 YEARS SINCE Stewart released his first single, "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl," and we're still listening to him and reading about him in RS. Rod's the truest of storytellers in his own right, and a great interpreter of others.

*Marcy Braunstein
Pittsburgh*

I CONCUR WITH HIS Royal Grayness. Critics were pissed he broke up Faces. While Rod changed how he marketed himself and, yes, released a few dodgy albums in the Eighties, he never strayed far from his Gasoline Alley.

*Shaun M. Tatarka
Great Falls, MT*

ANDY GREENE REMINDED me about the incredible depth of Rod Stewart's cat-

alog. A note to Rod: More rock, please.

Gary O'Neill, via the Internet

ROD HAS GREAT SONG-writing talent. Then Clive Davis got hold of Stewart's business sense and wrung



a string of cover albums out of him. Not taking chances came with a price: a major chunk of credibility gone. Rod's a surefire moneymaker, but he hasn't been an artist for decades.

*Thomas Thieme
Burbank, CA*

Fight of His Life

BEST OF LUCK TO LAWRENCE Franks ["The Good Soldier," RS 1245]. All it takes is a little empathy to see why he did what he did to stay alive. I wouldn't have the balls to even attempt West Point, let alone go AWOL to join one of the world's toughest militaries. When all the facts come out, I'm sure he will be vindicated.

John Sanuy, Eugene, OR

OFFICER AWOLS ARE RARE; that's why Franks' punishment was so harsh. He may not be a coward – his service in the legion speaks to his bravery – but running from your command and the men you lead is a cow-

ardly act, and no military jury will ever see it any other way. Do your time, and get on with your life.

Paul Amonett, via the Internet

I SURE HOPE OUR PRESIDENT got his October 8th copy and read about a true American, Lawrence Franks. This is a man who shouldn't be locked in a cage because he chose not to become another Army suicide statistic.

Jim Allen, Bonita Beach, FL

New Dylan Gems

VERY INSPIRING PREVIEW for Bob Dylan's new box set ["Bob Dylan's Lost Sixties Treasures," RS 1245]. The last

two installments of the Bootleg Series were fantastic; *Another Self Portrait* was surprisingly satisfying. Thanks for amping up the excitement for *The Cutting Edge*.

Mike Bado, via the Internet

Hamilton Heights

I HADN'T BEEN TO A BROAD-way show in 20 years when I saw *Hamilton*, which is, as advertised, spectacular ["Broadway's Hip-Hop Masterpiece," RS 1245]. Great to read an engaging profile of Lin-Manuel Miranda, who saw the poet in a Founding Father.

Fran George, via the Internet

LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA JUST won a MacArthur "genius" grant for *Hamilton*. Can a Nobel be far behind?

Stephen Rifkins, Raleigh, NC

Henley's Roots

NICE TO SEE DON HENLEY discover – and turn into a hit record – the "regressive" country sound pioneered by Gram Parsons ["An Eagle Comes Home to Roost," RS 1245]. It's further validation of how far ahead of his time Parsons was.

Bob Kealing, via the Internet

Mystery Host

WHILE I ADORED "STEPHEN Colbert," I'm still not sure about Stephen Colbert [Television, RS 1245] on late night. The new guy has oodles of charm, but is he as brilliant?

*Annabelle Leigh Lindstrom
Newport, RI*

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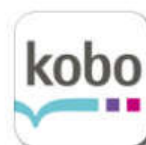
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NEXT ISSUE



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The Playlist

OUR FAVORITE SONGS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW

MY LIST



Keith Urban

Five Songs I Wish I'd Written

The Aussie country star – whose single “John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16” is hitting big – says these tunes speak to him as a songwriter.

Waylon Jennings

“Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way”

“Lord, it’s the same old tune, fiddle and guitar/ Where do we take it from here?” Those two lines alone hit upon the need to keep country music evolving for me.

Lucinda Williams

“Car Wheels on a Gravel Road”

This one’s timeless. I love Lucinda’s cryptic style of songwriting. It makes it feel so personal.

David Bowie

“Changes”

I’ve been getting back into Bowie recently. The pop architecture in his songwriting here is really exquisite. I still find it mind-blowing.

Kurt Vile

“Pretty Pimpin”

I don’t know how he wrote it, but it sounds like pure stream of consciousness. I’m playing this thing to death right now.

Ed Sheeran

“Photograph”

I fell in love with this song at Wembley, watching everybody in the audience sing along. The songwriting is just spellbinding.

1. Arcade Fire “Get Right”

2013’s *Reflektor* was a fantastic voyage into a disco underworld. But Arcade Fire didn’t forget how to rock – check this bluesy, Stones-like outtake from their new reissue of the album. Extra bonus: Halfway through, it flips into a sweet instrumental anthem à la Floyd.



2. Selena Gomez “Hands to Myself”

This fun, flirty Max Martin joint is the catchiest tune on Gomez’s new album, *Revival*: “You’re metaphorical gin ‘n juice,” she sings, “so come on, give me a taste.”

3. Elvis Costello “April 5th”

Costello trades verses with Kris Kristofferson and Rosanne Cash on this moving unreleased ballad from 2008, which he’s unearthed to go with his new autobiography.

4. Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson “Say Say Say (2015 Remix)”

Some McCartney fans hate this song; others of us have always had a soft spot for his supercheesy, ultrasmooth, extremely Eighties duet with the King of Pop. The alternate vocals on this new mix, from the reissue of Macca’s 1983 LP *Pipes of Peace*, probably won’t change any minds, but they sure sound sweet to us.



5. Beach House “One Thing”

Surprise! The Baltimore indie-pop duo already released one of 2015’s dreamiest LPs in August – but they just dropped another one. It’s called *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, and after hearing this gorgeous chiller, that’s exactly what we’re doing.

6. Hinds “Garden”

One of the best bands we saw at SXSW this spring was this free-spirited garage quartet from Madrid. We’re loving this Strokes-y jam from their debut album, due out in January.



7. David Bowie “Blackstar”

New Bowie alert! Any fresh music from the Thin White Duke is cause for celebration where we come from, and this song, recorded for a new British crime drama, definitely counts: It’s an eerie groove with disembodied-sounding Bowie vocals over a trip-hop beat.





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Rock & Roll

Kurt Cobain's Deepest Cuts

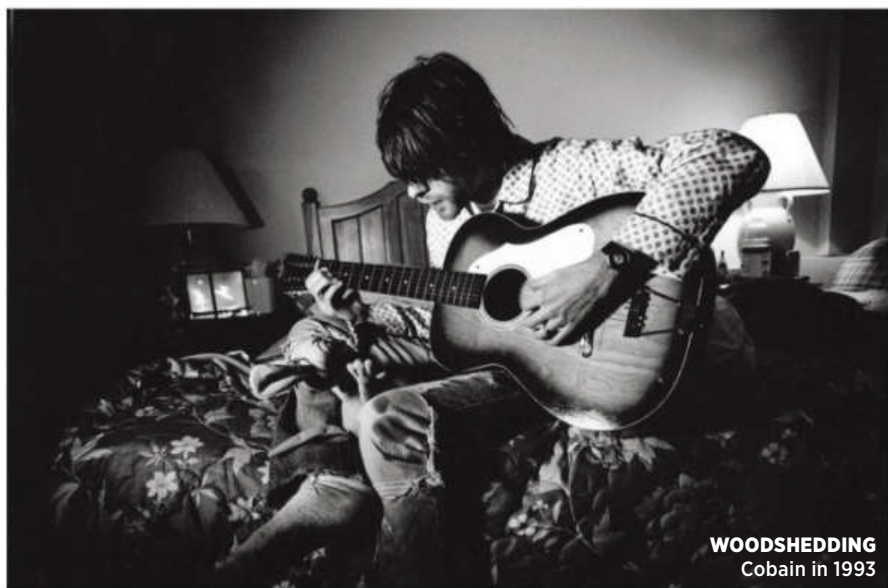
New set unearths trove of intimate home recordings

BY DAVID FRICKE

THERE IS THE RECLUSIVE young man laying down early acoustic versions of his songs into a cassette machine, the giddy adolescent making silly-voice radio ads for his new band, and the keen experimenter building sound collages and storms of guitar distortion. There is also the serious writer recounting an early suicide attempt with performance-artist resolve.

IN BLOOM

Cobain in Seattle, 1993



WOODSHEDDING
Cobain in 1993

the unabashed romantic covering the Beatles' "And I Love Her," and the besieged rock star singing about his anguish and insecurity from the edge of oblivion.

They are all Kurt Cobain. And they are all on one record: the soundtrack to *Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck*, writer-director Brett Morgen's HBO documentary about the late Nirvana singer-guitarist. To be released by Universal on November 13th in a variety of formats, including a 31-track deluxe edition, *Montage of Heck: The Home Recordings* is Cobain's first official solo album, curated by Morgen from more than 200 hours of private cassette tapes, including previously unissued songs, that Cobain made from the late Eighties until shortly before he took his life in April 1994 at age 27.

"There is nothing on the album that was previously released on any album or, as far as I know, in bootleg form," Morgen says. "Everything came from those cassettes, and we only included stuff that was Kurt's solo work, as opposed to band rehearsals." Morgen sequenced the set "to create a feeling that the listener was sitting in Kurt's apartment, bearing witness to his creation."

Morgen – who was originally approached in 2007 about doing a Cobain film by the singer's widow, Courtney Love – began listening to that wealth of tape when he finally started production in 2013, with Cobain's daughter, Frances Bean, as an executive producer. Cobain did not date his cassette recordings, says Morgen, "but we were able to ascertain for most of the tracks the year, sometimes within a few months, based on what else existed on the tape." That is literally true in some cases. The droning-ballad demo "Burn the Rain" ends abruptly when Cobain walks away to answer the phone, leaving his tape machine running – you can hear him take a message for his girlfriend at the time, Tracy Marander. A delicate solo-

guitar instrumental, "Letters to Frances," is clearly a loving ode to Frances, born in 1992 and only 20 months old at her father's death.

For Morgen, the pivotal moment on *The Home Recordings* is the shock, almost halfway into the deluxe edition, of the spoken-word piece "Aberdeen." (It does not appear on the 13-cut "standard" soundtrack, which mostly contains music and demos of Nirvana songs.) In that track, featured in Morgen's documentary over newly created animation, Cobain describes his isolation and near-suicidal despair as a teenager in Aberdeen, Washington, in the eerie, neutral voice of someone reading from a journal.

"He actually did several takes of it," Morgen says. "In the long form, you actually hear his edit points or him flipping over the papers."

"The joy in the first half of the album" is the creativity that "poured out of him," the director says of Cobain. "Nobody is telling him to go write a song. He's doing it and amusing himself." But "Aberdeen," Morgen contends, "deepens the context for everything that follows" – including the previously unissued song "She Only Lies," a harrowing vocal-and-bass-guitar portrait of the singer drowning in emotional betrayal.

Frances, now 23, had no part in compiling *The Home Recordings*. "I turned it in," Morgen says. "The next word I heard was 'It's approved.'" He likens the set's forensic nature to the way Bob Dylan's long-running *Bootleg Series* "further[s] your understanding of Dylan's progress." And, Morgen claims, "there's a tremendous amount of joy. We never got to see Kurt smile that much in public." But on many of these recordings, especially the early ones, "You can imagine what he looked like, sitting in his apartment by himself, having a fuckin' blast," Morgen says. "You're hearing him smile." 

Kurt Unplugged

Five highlights from 'Montage of Heck: The Home Recordings'

'The Happy Guitar'

A young, cheerful Cobain plays a jaunty folk-blues number on acoustic guitar like he's holding down the stage in a mid-Sixties Greenwich Village coffee-house. When Morgen says you can hear Cobain smiling on the early tapes, this is what he means.

'Rehash'

Cobain revs up the distortion for an upstairs-downstairs riff that suggests Black Sabbath in their prime and pushes his voice up to a manic, shredded falsetto. But there is a genuine song – clearly indebted to Cobain's Northwest-punk idols the Melvins – coming through the turbulence. At points, Cobain shouts "Solo!" and "Chorus!" where he plans to put more noise and ideas later.

'And I Love Her'

The grunge-rock avenger often cited as the John Lennon of his generation covers this Paul McCartney ballad – originally recorded by the Beatles in 1964 – with blatant, plaintive need. Says Morgen, "There was a lot more Paul in Kurt than he let on."

'She Only Lies'

Heard near the end of Morgen's documentary, this emotional seesaw between accusation and helplessness literally sounds like the depth of despair: Cobain picking a bony riff on



A vintage Cobain mixtape, which he called "Montage of Heck"

bass guitar, singing as if he is already receding into the distance. "There is only one version," Morgen says. It is more than enough.

'Do Re Mi' medley

"There is no resurrection," Morgen says of his Cobain film – it ends with the singer's death. But *The Home Recordings* concludes with more hope: the breaking-light spell of "Do Re Mi," Cobain's last known song. An excerpt from his 1994 demo appeared on the 2004 box set *With the Lights Out*; Morgen includes the complete surviving performance.

D.F.



**CAGED
BIRD**
Matthew
Shultz
at work

Cage the Elephant's Garage-Rock Surprise

Kentucky band teams with Dan Auerbach for a more adventurous version of its stomping sound

CAGE THE ELEPHANT GUITARIST BRAD SHULTZ STILL SOUNDS EMBARRASSED about the night he asked Dan Auerbach to work with his band, which opened for the Black Keys last year. "I was like, 'Let me show you some songs, dude! We gotta do some tracks together!'" Shultz says. "Typical stuff – I was really wasted."

The Kentucky group endured a traumatic period surrounding 2013's Grammy-nominated *Melophobia*, with intraband beefs resulting in the exit of lead guitarist Lincoln Parish. "The last record was a living hell," Shultz says. "We were going through so much turmoil."

Auerbach agreed to produce Cage's fourth album, *Tell Me I'm Pretty* (due December 18th), in Nashville. He ended up giving the band a fresh start and a fresh sound. In the studio, he would often play the bandmates obscure Afrobeat or garage-rock records before a take. "It was an experiment to knock us out of what was comfortable," singer Matthew Shultz says. Auerbach, who pitched in with guitar and keyboards on the LP, also emphasized first-take vocals. "I'd say, 'But wait! I think that's a bad note there!'" Matthew recalls. "But it stayed."

Reflecting those approaches – as well as Brad's deep dive into Sixties bands like the Zombies and Tommy James – *Tell Me I'm Pretty* recalls everything from psychedelic bubblegum pop to, not coincidentally, the spare tautness of the Black Keys. For all the group's difficulties, Brad feels that Cage emerged sane and unified after wrapping up the album in a brisk three and a half weeks. "Sometimes you have to take an immense amount of stress to bring things to a head," he says. "This record brought us back to being those kids in Bowling Green."

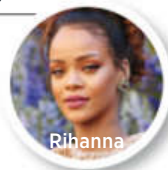
DAVID BROWNE

STUDIO NOTES

RIHANNA AND KANYE MAKE AN ART PROJECT

"It's hard to actually put them all on the same album," Rihanna said of the eclectic songs on *Anti*, her upcoming first album in three years. Kanye West executive-produced the LP, and the snippets and leaks that surfaced (as well as the cover image, a piece by artist Roy Nachum built around a childhood photo of RiRi) suggest an arty left turn for the R&B superstar.

JON DOLAN



Rihanna

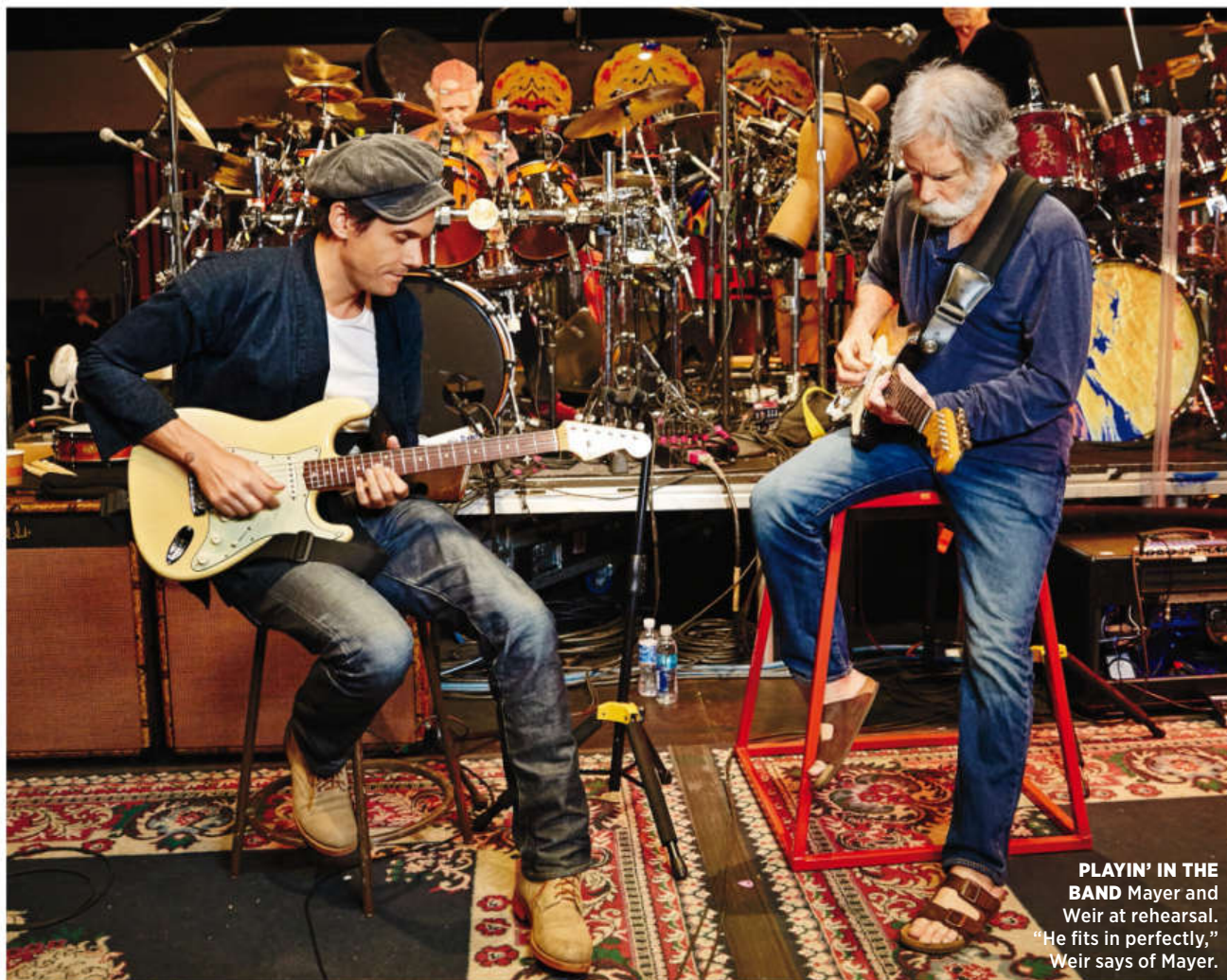
ELO'S FAR-OUT COMEBACK ALBUM

ELO leader Jeff Lynne cut the band's first LP in 14 years, entirely at his home in L.A. The title track to *Alone in the Universe* (due in November) came from reading about the Voyager 1 spacecraft. "It's gone out of our solar system," he said. "I thought that was the loneliest thing."

ANDY GREENE



Lynne



PLAYIN' IN THE BAND Mayer and Weir at rehearsal. "He fits in perfectly," Weir says of Mayer.

The Dead Rise Again

Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart find a new chapter and a surprising new Jerry: John Mayer

BY PATRICK DOYLE

IT'S MID-OCTOBER, AND FOR THE past three weeks, members of the Grateful Dead and John Mayer have been rehearsing together at Bob Weir's TRI Studios in San Rafael, California. They've worked through more than 50 songs, which they keep track of on a whiteboard. "We know the songs we've been over about 75 percent now," says Weir. "Which is about as good as the Dead ever got, anyway."

Dead & Company – Weir, Mayer, and Dead drummers Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart – are feeling good about their first tour, starting October 29th in Albany, New York. "It's the most incredible thing

we got," says Hart. "We don't need to practice. We just need to stand in a small circle and look at each other." "It's telepathy," adds Weir. "We're not thinking; we're just letting it pour out. John fits in perfectly."

About four years ago, Mayer started listening to the Grateful Dead on SiriusXM nonstop, which he calls "an awakening." He started working on his own album aimed to capture the Dead's organic sound. "You should have seen me in the studio, going behind the drums trying to do a loping beat, then singing," he says. "You can't multitrack that vibe." Earlier this year, Mayer got to jam with Weir while guest-hosting *The Late Late Show*, which Weir

was playing. "The soundcheck was almost impossible to stop," says Weir. "We had the kind of fun that you just don't walk away from. It was not unlike the night I met Jerry on New Year's Eve of 1964."

They started discussing the possibility of more work together, but the Dead were already planning this past summer's Fare Thee Well shows with Trey Anastasio, billed as the last time the "core four" – Weir, Kreutzmann, Hart and bassist Phil Lesh – would ever play together. The triumphant stadium gigs helped the Dead camps end years of bad blood, stemming from disputes about Weir and Lesh touring without the other mem- [Cont. on 18]

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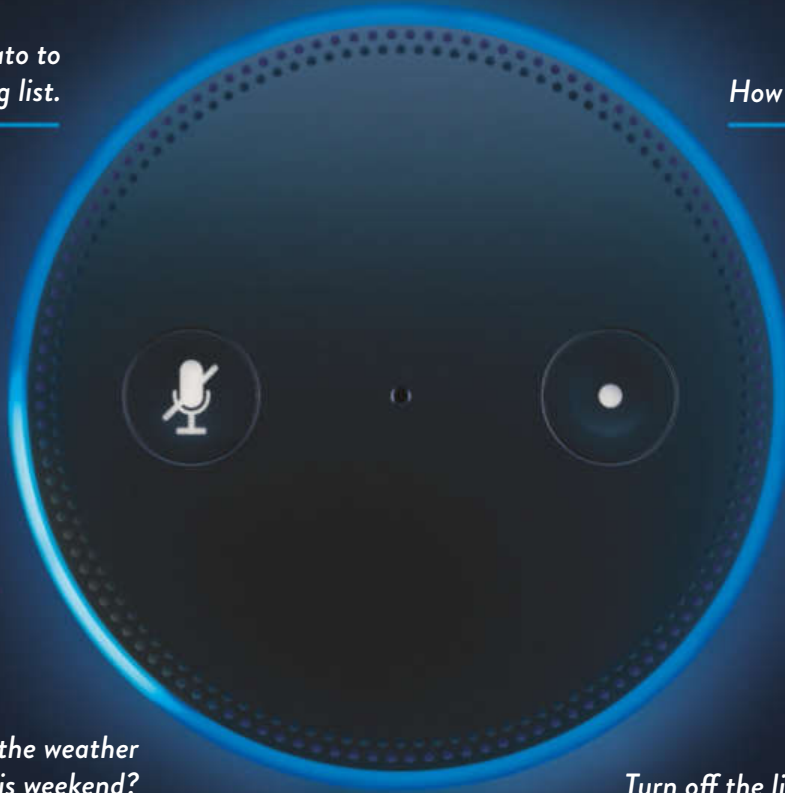
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DEAD & COMPANY

[Cont. from 16] bers, as Furthur, and money issues related to the Dead's last tour, in 2009. "It was great, everybody coming together and burying the hatchet – and not through someone's skull," says Hart.

While Lesh saw the Fare Thee Well shows as the end of his touring career – he now sticks to residencies in California and New York – the other members wanted to keep going. "Once I've got my 'Dead head' back on," says Hart, "it's all I can think about!"

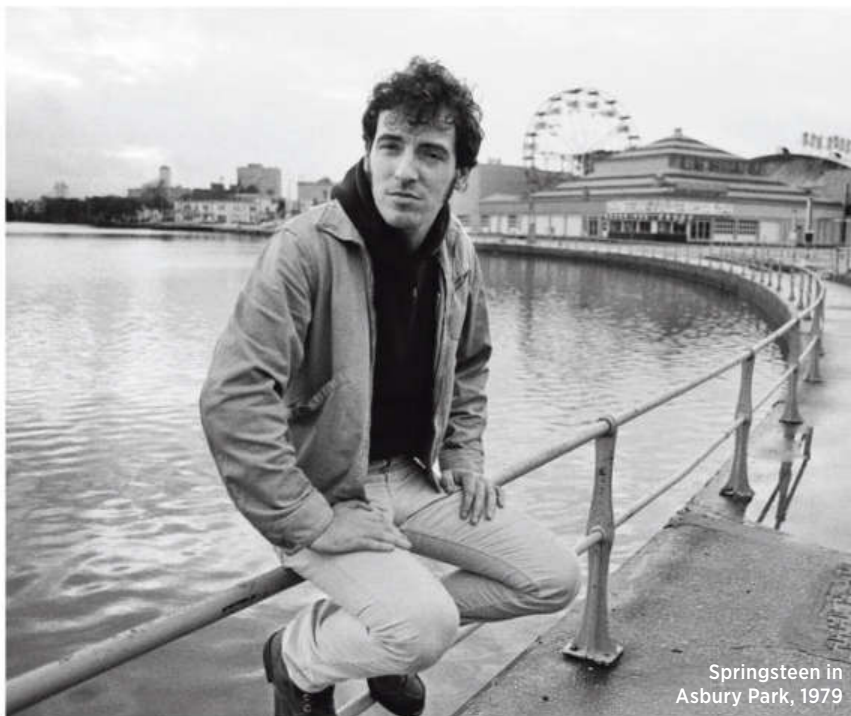
Mayer attended all five Fare Thee Well shows, and spent time with Anastasio; they even had a long conversation offstage during the Drums/Space portion of one show. "Trey started talking about how much charisma Jerry had, and they kept telling him he had to go back onstage," says Mayer.

By then, Mayer was deep into what he calls "Grateful Dead University," spending hours every day practicing for a possible tour. "It's been intense," he adds of his regimen. Mayer has also been getting a historical education on the Dead; Weir has recommended he listen to the band's 1977 shows and its spring 1990 tour with keyboardist Brent Mydland. "It's like a giant Polaroid I'm still shaking," says Mayer. "'77 is sort of the most approachable era. But then you go back to '72 or '73, where they're in a much more raw state, and my favorite version becomes Strat-era Jerry Garcia playing. All of a sudden I go, 'Oh, he's a blues guy!' He's basically doing Freddie King licks, but he's bending them better than all the legends. Their music keeps changing. You can't predict or map it."

Mayer knows Dead fans may be skeptical about involving a pop star. "I don't feel pressure, but I feel a responsibility," he says. Mayer has no illusions he can replace Jerry Garcia: "But I think I can be the conduit to take you to that place you used to go."

In rehearsals, highlights so far include "They Love Each Other" and "Here Comes Sunshine." Weir remembers the moment he realized the lineup had serious chemistry – though he doesn't want to name the song and spoil the surprise. "It started to inch ever so slightly toward reggae," he says. "Nobody pushed it that way. It just occurred and the clouds parted. That's when I knew we had a goddamn band." Weir stopped playing to try to record the song with his iPhone, but by then the band had moved on.

"Let the record show," says Mayer, "that Bob Weir's a taper." 



Springsteen in
Asbury Park, 1979

Bruce's Big 'River'

Springsteen's 1980 LP was a sprawling two-record set. A new reissue shows he left a lot in the tank

THREE WEEKS AFTER HE RELEASED *The River*, Bruce Springsteen took the stage in Tempe, Arizona. It was November 5th, 1980, the day after Ronald Reagan was elected president, and Springsteen and the E Street Band tore through their set with extra ferocity. "I don't know what you guys think about what happened last night," Springsteen told the crowd before "Badlands." "I think it's pretty frightening. You guys are young, there's gonna be a lot of people depending on you coming up, so this is for you."

A pristine video of the show is one of the highlights of *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*, a four-CD/three-DVD box set (due December 4th) of material from Springsteen's fifth album. As his onstage speech indicates, it was a time of growing social conscience. "It was a record where I first started to tackle men and women and families and marriage," Springsteen said in 2009. "I wanted to capture the themes that I'd been writing about... and at the same time add the music that made our live shows so much fun for our audience."

The *River* sessions produced Springsteen's first Top 10 single, "Hungry Heart," and way more material than could fit on even a double album. Some of the outtakes found their way onto later compilations,

but there was enough left behind to fill an entire disc that'll be revelatory to even hardcore fans. Previously unreleased song "Party Lights" features lyrics that later appeared in "Point Blank," "Atlantic City" and even the extra verse Springsteen tacked on to Tom Waits' "Jersey Girl."

Springsteen archivist Thom Zimny dug into the vaults and unearthed the Tempe show – and was shocked by what he saw. "The band has such raw energy," says Zimny. "The way it was shot really gives you an opportunity to take in the full stage and the look of the E Street Band at that time. Also, the sound is just amazing."

Zimny also shot *The Ties That Bind*, a new documentary about the making of *The River*. With Springsteen as its only interview subject, it's an intimate film shot on the grounds of his New Jersey home, where he plays acoustic renditions of *River* songs and talks about his creative process. "I wanted the viewer to feel like they were sitting in Bruce's backyard," says Zimny. Now that Zimny has created documentaries about *Born to Run*, *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River*, doesn't logic dictate that he'll tackle *Nebraska* next? "I would love that," he says. "I didn't know about *The River* until the day after *Darkness* came out and Bruce gave me a call, so let's keep our fingers crossed." **ANDY GREENE**



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THE ALL-NEW
TACOMA



OUT IN THE COLD
Petty lounging
in his van in
Santa Monica, 1999

Petty's True Confessions

The singer opens up about the darkest period of his life for the first time in a definitive new biography

BY ANDY GREENE

BY 1997, TOM PETTY'S LIFE WAS in shambles. His latest album, *She's the One*, had bombed commercially, and he'd just fired his longtime drummer, Stan Lynch of the Heartbreakers, after years of acrimony. Even worse, his 20-year marriage had just come to a bitter end. Living in a tiny house he calls a "chicken shack," he found a new way to deal with his pain: heroin. Before long, he was hooked. "Tried to go cold turkey, and that wouldn't work," he says in the new book *Petty: The Biography*. "It's an ugly fucking thing."

The book, by author and former Del Fuegos guitarist Warren Zanes, marks the first time Petty has ever talked about his heroin abuse publicly, but it's far from the

only dark moment in the book. Petty and Zanes have decided to tell the unvarnished truth, and the result is not only the definitive account of Petty's life, but one of the best rock biographies in recent memory.

Zanes makes clear he's no impartial observer—in fact, he's a Petty superfan going way back. "American Girl" seemed to be wide open for listeners to see themselves in the picture," Zanes writes in the preface. "I certainly saw myself. Something happened when that voice delivered those words in that way." The pair first met in 1986, when the Del Fuegos opened for Petty, and they stayed friends over the years, as the Del Fuegos broke up



and Zanes became a teacher and historian and wrote an acclaimed book about the making of Dusty Springfield's *Dusty in Memphis*.

Their closeness seems to have helped Petty open up about the most painful chapters of his life, all the way back to his Florida childhood. He had a contentious relationship with his father, Earl, who once beat him for shooting a slingshot at a passing Cadillac. "I was covered in raised welts, from my head to my toes," Petty remembers in the book. "I mean, you can't imagine someone hitting a child like that.... I was fucking five!"

Much of *Petty: The Biography* focuses on the saga of the Heartbreakers—the

bond between bandmates as well as the tensions. Most of the group members were also in Mudcrutch, Petty's early-Seventies band, back when he was a skinny blond nobody playing bass. Zanes had frank discussions with all of them – including former drummer Lynch, who opens up about his long-simmering difficulties with Petty.

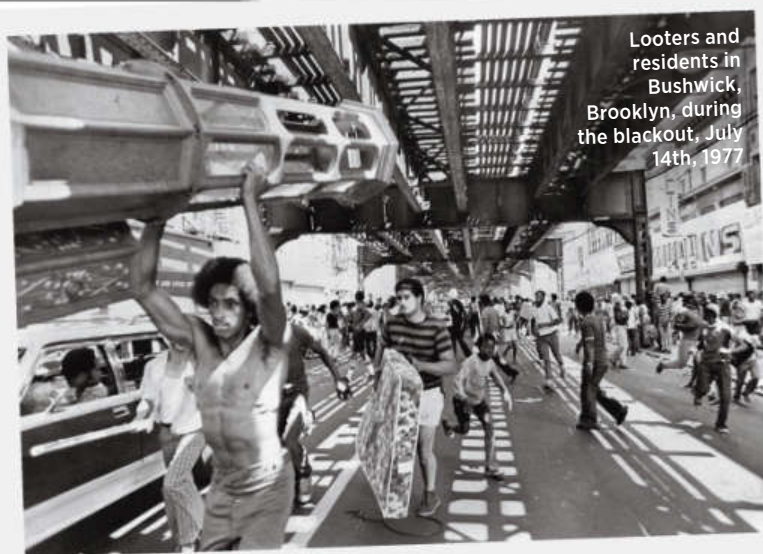
Lynch was particularly irked about Petty's 1989 hit solo album, *Full Moon Fever*, which Petty recorded with minimal help from the Heartbreakers and a different drummer. But he has plenty of regrets about how he handled his final years with Petty. "I didn't need to be so big, so loud, so fucking noisy," Lynch says in the book. "If I could talk to that guy... I would've gone, 'Son, you're a fool. You just don't know it yet. So why don't you keep your fucking mouth shut and just let a few things work around you.'"

That's not to say he's forgiven Petty, especially when it comes to the subject of former bassist Howie Epstein, who died of heroin-related complica-

"I was covered in welts, from my head to my toes," Petty remembers. "You can't imagine someone beating a child like that."

tions in 2003. "I never forgave Tom for not being at his funeral," says Lynch. "I can't. I wish I could." Petty says he went to a separate, private memorial, and is deeply hurt over Lynch's insinuations that he didn't do enough to save Epstein's life. "I don't think Stan knows what we went through with Howie," says Petty. "Nobody does. I owe Howie more than to tell those tales. But I will say that I miss him all the time. I hear his voice on records, and it just kills me."

Petty managed to avoid Epstein's fate by going to rehab and kicking his heroin habit. The sweetest event of the past 15 years was Petty's surprising decision to reunite Mudcrutch in 2008, which Zanes takes as a sign of Petty's commitment to his magic. "You don't see Billy Joel re-forming the Hassles or Bruce Springsteen re-forming Steel Mill," Zanes writes. "Probably for very legitimate reasons. It was a career move that could stop a manager's heart.... [But] Petty didn't always think in terms of what made sense; it was all about the songs he thought 'might be back there.'" This revealing book gets inside that uncompromising spirit.



Looters and residents in Bushwick, Brooklyn, during the blackout, July 14th, 1977

Bad Old New York

This year's most exciting debut novel is a wild ride through the grimy, glorious city of the 1970s

GARTH RISK HALLBERG'S *City on Fire* – a wild plunge into the bleak haze of late-1970s New York – is being touted as the best and biggest debut of the year. The most amazing part is that the guy behind it wasn't even born until 1978 – and grew up, of all places, on North Carolina's coastal plains.

Hallberg, already a respected book critic, was raised in Greenville, "a small college town on *Playboy*'s top-20 list of best party schools," he says. "I never really felt at home there." Hallberg escaped into Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and the cultural "supernova" of Koch-era New York. "I was my town's resident beatnik at 14," he says. "That downtown [New York] scene seemed like this fantastical landscape. I loved the idea that all the people who didn't belong anywhere else ended up in one place."

The idea behind *City on Fire* came to Hallberg in 2003, while he was on a Greyhound bus to New York – a pilgrimage he'd been making since age 17. Just as he got his first glimpse of lower Manhattan's shattered skyline, a Billy Joel song, "Miami 2017," popped up on his iPod. "I'd never heard it before," says Hallberg. "I respect Billy Joel, but I'm not a guy who's gonna sit down and listen to the entire *Essential Billy Joel*." The song, released in 1976 but narrated from the future, envisions the destruction of New York over 40 years. For Hallberg, it was as if the past and the pres-



ent – essentially, 1976 and 9/11 – were collapsing together in that moment. "There's this imagery of the arsons that were going on in the Seventies, and I was like, 'This song is about right now.' I immediately wrote out an entire scene, and after 10 minutes, the essence of the story was there."

Hallberg returned to the idea in 2007, by which time he and his wife had moved to Brooklyn, where they still live with their two young kids.

City on Fire uses a singular crime – the shooting of a teenage girl in Central Park on New Year's Eve 1976 – to explore the lives of myriad New Yorkers: denizens of Wall Street, estranged high-society siblings, Molotov-cocktail-lobbing anarchists and star-crossed kids living on the periphery of the city's punk scene. As the investigation into the shooting unfolds, they're drawn toward one another and into the chaos of the Great Blackout of July 13th, 1977, a perfect darkness from which only some will emerge.

Previously living off \$16,000 a year, Hallberg got a record-breaking advance of nearly \$2 million for the novel, a book that is truly that great, rare thing: a wholly inhabitable universe, reflecting back our lives while also offering an exhilarating escape from them. "For me," says Hallberg, "the city was a place to dream and a place to work. I want everyone to experience that freedom."

JULIA HOLMES

It's Time to Cut the Cord

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO STOP paying for cable television: Inexpensive streaming devices and an array of Internet TV services mean that practically all of the shows you care most about can be watched for less than the average U.S. cable bill of roughly \$100 a month, without the annual contract and headaches. You won't get every channel, though, so it's worth doing a little research on the different cord-cutting options. Here are three possible configurations. **GREG EMMANUEL**



THE BINGE WATCHER



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STREAM THESE

Amazon Prime Instant Video, Netflix, HBO Now, Showtime Anytime, Hulu Plus

The Amazon Fire has a simple-to-use remote with voice control that even responds to general questions about traffic and weather, and it now supports 4K – which means if you have a compatible TV, you can stream new episodes of *Orange Is the New Black* in ultra-high definition. It also gives you the most options if you want to watch premium-TV series: In addition to accessing subscription services like Netflix, HBO Go and Showtime Anytime, Fire TV is one of the few ways to stream Amazon Prime shows like the Emmy winner *Transparent*. Network series like *Empire* and *The Simpsons* are available with a Hulu Plus subscription, but they may not appear until days after they've aired.

What You Lose: You're definitely going to have to dodge some spoilers. Many networks, including AMC (*The Walking Dead*), wait to put their shows on stream services a day after they air. And you'll miss big network events like the Grammys and the Oscars.

Money Saved: The combined monthly cost of Amazon Prime (\$8.25), HBO Now (\$15), Showtime Anytime (\$11), Hulu Plus (\$8) and Netflix (\$10) comes to \$52.25 – that's a little more than half of what most cable customers in the U.S. pay per month.

THE MOVIE BUFF



BUY THIS

Apple TV
(\$149-\$199, store.apple.com)

STREAM THESE

iTunes, Hulu Plus

The new Apple TV remote features Siri, which has some cool television applications: For one, that Friday-night conundrum about what to watch can be solved with a simple command, e.g., "Show me Eighties teen comedies." This is tied to the expansive iTunes movie library – still the most comprehensive catalog of streamable films. If you're a classic-movie buff, add a subscription to Hulu Plus, which features around 900 titles from the Criterion Collection, including masterpieces like Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* and Federico Fellini's *8 1/2*. Apple TV is continually adding apps, and the content pool is large. Just remember, subscribing to additional services means more dough.

What You Lose: If TV shows really take a back seat to movies, you won't miss much. Of course, there are films that are still unavailable for streaming (1978 Oscar winner *The Deer Hunter*, for example).

Money Saved: This depends on how many movies you watch. By just subscribing to Hulu Plus, you're only out \$8 a month, but keep in mind that renting movies from iTunes will cost about \$4.99 each. If you rent two or three a week, that can add up to \$50 monthly, but you're still likely to come way under the cost of cable.

THE SPORTS FAN



BUY THESE

Google Chromecast and Mohu Leaf 50 HDTV Antenna
(\$35, google.com; \$70, gomohu.com)

STREAM THIS

Sling TV

Sling TV is a subscription-streaming app that includes live feeds of ESPN and ESPN2 (along with a basic package that features AMC, TNT, TBS, the Food Network and the History channel, among others). You can access it through Google's ridiculously well-priced Chromecast streamer, which uses your phone (iOS or Android) – a device that you probably lose far less than the television remote – to search for and play content. For the major sporting events (Super Bowl, World Series, Monday Night Football), you're going to need an HD antenna such as the Mohu Leaf 50. Like the rabbit ears of yore, these are a bit finicky and work a lot better if you live close to a major urban area.

What You Lose: Hardcore fans may have the hardest time making the cut, especially if you're a devotee of the local team airing nightly on a regional cable channel. Even the individual sports' streaming apps, like the excellent MLB.TV, may block games due to blackout restrictions. The NFL doesn't even stream games live, just after they're over, with a subscription.

Money Saved: If you're content with just the ESPNs and whatever else you can pull down with an HD antenna, you'll be saving about \$80 per month.

Scott Stapp's TV Therapy

After a series of disturbing incidents, the Creed frontman finds a fresh start – with the help of a reality show

BY ANDY GREENE

LAST NOVEMBER, SCOTT STAPP called his son's school to report some shocking news: "I've uncovered that the core of ISIS is within my own family," he said in a voicemail. "Please call me immediately."

The call, which Stapp never explained, was one of the most disturbing incidents in a pattern of erratic and paranoid behavior for the former Creed frontman – so troubling that his wife, Jaclyn, demanded he move out of the house they shared in southern Florida. Stapp spent about a month driving aimlessly around the country and posting unhinged videos to Facebook. In one, he ranted, "There are people who have taken advantage and stolen money from me, and they're trying to discredit me." In a phone call around the same time, he went on to suggest his life was in danger. Deeply concerned, Jaclyn called 911. "He thinks he's part of the CIA," she told the operator. "And he's supposed to assassinate Obama."

In the early 2000s, Creed's Christian-infused message and Stapp's shirtless-messiah charisma helped the band sell 50 million albums. But his drug and alcohol abuse led to its eventual breakup after 2009's *Full Circle*. Stapp, who suffers from bipolar disorder, was involuntarily placed in a psychiatric facility late last year. After treatment, including medication to control his disorder, Stapp was released, and not long after, he and Jaclyn were tentatively back together.

Stapp stayed largely quiet about his recovery until October, when VH1 began airing the sixth season of the reality series *Couples Therapy*, which features him and Jaclyn sharing a house with model Janice Dickinson, *Mob Wives*' Angela "Big Ang" Raiola, *RuPaul's Drag Race* contestant Carmen Carrera, New Jersey rapper Joe Budden and their respective partners.

For Stapp, the show is an opportunity to prove to the world that his breakdown – which he blames on an interaction between his antidepressants and an

unprescribed medication – is behind him. He also wants to explain the Obama-assassination talk, which earned him a visit from the Secret Service. "In my delusional state, I thought that Obama was in trouble and I was trying to save him," says Stapp, 42. "And it got all twisted and con-

lish their marital bonds, all while being filmed 24/7. At first, the Stapps were skeptical that the show would actually help. "We were initially concerned about it being authentic therapy and not a scripted show," says Stapp, who taped throughout the spring and summer after his initial round of psychiatric care had ended.

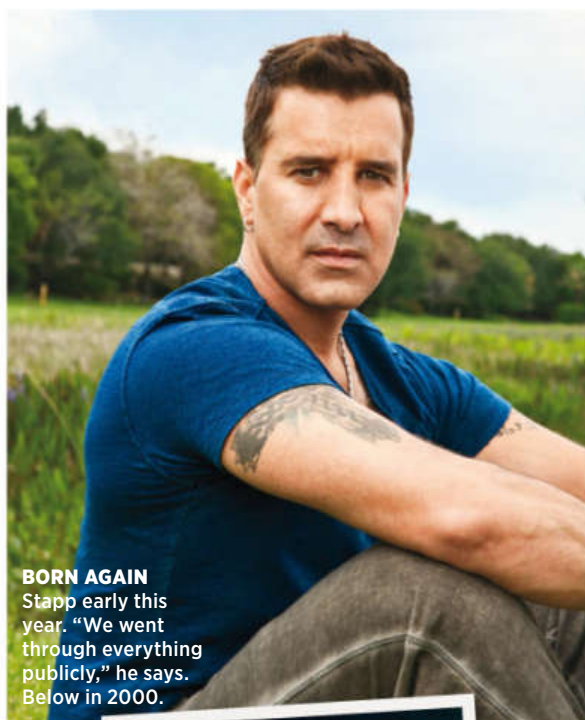
"After multiple conversations, they really convinced us it was real therapy," he says. "We went through everything in the past year publicly, so we might as well continue it publicly."

Adjusting to life on the set of a reality show was difficult for the couple. "[The show's head counselor] Dr. Jenn told us it was part of the therapeutic process because it put us in a situation where we could keep no secrets and everything was exposed," says Stapp. "Even the conversations you would think were private, like in the bathroom or in bed at night, were subject to the doctor's scrutiny and analysis. It was a lot to endure."

Reality treatment shows have been criticized for exploiting emotionally and mentally vulnerable people; five former cast members of VH1's *Celebrity Rehab*, including country singer Mindy McReady and former Alice in Chains bassist Mike Starr, died

shortly after appearing on the show. The Stapps are ready to take on the criticism they expect to face. "Scott's always had his critics," Jaclyn says. "Fifty percent of people love him, and 50 percent hate him. We have thick skin." Their 17-year-old son, Jagger, also helped persuade them to do the show. "He told us, 'C'mon, Mom, DMX even did it!'" Stapp says.

Stapp plans to launch a solo tour next year, and he hopes that Creed, who last played together in 2012, will re-form at some point. "I ran into the guys, totally unplanned, at the Hard Rock Hotel in Orlando a few months back," he says. "We ended up just hanging out by the pool for three hours, just catching up. I hope we get back to the studio at some point and make a record. Our 20th anniversary is coming up in 2017, so we'll see how it works out."



BORN AGAIN Stapp early this year. "We went through everything publicly," he says. Below in 2000.



voluted. It's really impossible to give a reasonable explanation for someone who is in a manic psychosis experiencing delusions and hallucinations."

On *Couples Therapy*, the Stapps clash with their housemates and try to re-estab-



HALF-NAKED TRUTH Welch after stripping down in Austin

Florence: Big Tour, Bigger Year

IT'S A SCORCHING TEXAS NIGHT IN EARLY OCTOBER, AND Florence and the Machine are wrapping a headlining set at the Austin City Limits Music Festival. "It's fucking hot, so take off something you don't need and wave it above your head like a flag," Florence Welch commands the crowd. Then she strips down to white bell-bottoms and a bra, leaps offstage and disappears into a sea of outstretched hands. The next day, she explains that shucking her clothes wasn't about being titillating, but rather "about jumping off the cliff because you want people to feel free from judgment." Earlier this year, Welch issued her own declaration of individuality, *How Big How Blue How Beau-*

tiful. Full of tales of bad romance and redemption inspired by a recent breakup, it became her first Number One album. Her tour, which wraps its American leg October 30th, is a victory lap – and proof that Florence and the Machine are one of rock's best live acts. In Austin, as the 11-person Machine pumped out cinematic art rock, Welch belted huge choruses, struck ballet poses and stalked the stage – part Stevie Nicks, part Bono, all Florence. Bringing her new songs to the stage has altered Welch's feelings about the tough times that inspired them: "The alchemy of performance changes something that was sad – it causes a chemical reaction in your bloodstream, and it comes out as joyful." **KORY GROW**

TOUR NOTES

TAME IMPALA MELT BRAINS ON U.S. TOUR

"I'm into the way music can affect you – emotionally, spacially – how it can make you feel like you're not quite standing two feet on the ground," Tame Impala's Kevin Parker told us recently. That feeling was in full effect for his band's first Radio City Music Hall gig, on October 6th. Highlights included huge oscillator projections controlled by Parker's guitar solos and a guerrilla disco breakdown during "Elephant." At one point, he



climbed toward the balcony opera boxes midsong to sit and admire his own show. Later, looking in awe at the surroundings, Parker could only declare, "Holy moly!" – which pretty much summed up the night. **WILL HERMES**

BRIAN WILSON FINDS A SWEET NEW GROOVE

Next year, Brian Wilson will launch a huge *Pet Sounds* 50th-anniversary tour. But right now, he's touring intimate venues with an energized band that includes Beach Boy Al Jardine and Jardine's son Matt (whose high harmonies echo Carl Wilson), plus early-Seventies Beach Boy Blondie Chaplin. At a recent gig in Queens, Wilson, looking better than he has in years, delivered a joyous 30-song set, passing the mic to Jardine for the 1973



rarity "California Saga (California)" and letting Chaplin extend "Wild Honey" with blasts of fuzz from his guitar. "I've got the greatest band, and we work hard," says Wilson. "But we have a lot of fun too. I feel proud every night!" **PATRICK DOYLE**

Life After the Allmans

A year after the last show, Derek Trucks and Warren Haynes open up about their new plans and why the Brothers are no more

BY DAVID FRICKE

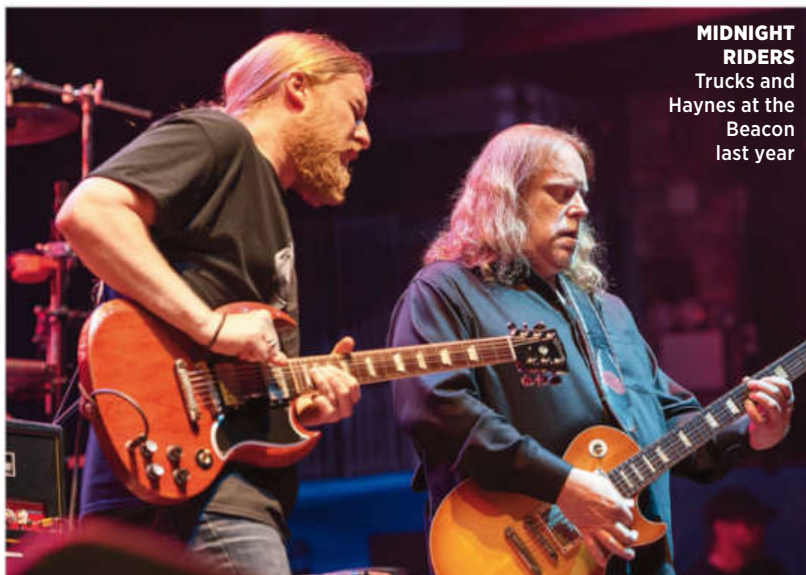
AT ABOUT 1:30 A.M. ON OCTOBER 29th, 2014, at New York's Beacon Theatre, the Allman Brothers Band ended their final concert with the first song they ever played, 45 years earlier: Muddy Waters' "Trouble No More." Guitarists Warren Haynes and Derek Trucks – who simultaneously had announced they were leaving the Southern-rock institution the previous January – then returned to their own long-running gigs. Trucks, the nephew of Allmans drummer Butch Trucks and a member since 1999, was onstage three nights later with Tedeschi Trucks Band, the group he leads with his wife, singer-guitarist Susan Tedeschi.

The day after that Beacon show, Haynes – who played with the Allmans for more than 20 years – flew to Cincinnati and into a 10-hour practice for a Halloween concert with his band Gov't Mule. "I oversang during rehearsal and started losing my voice," he recalls with a rueful laugh. "Then I got a sinus infection that wouldn't go away. I embarked on this next chapter with a pretty hellish two or three weeks."

Haynes, 55, and Trucks, 36, are in the full bloom of careers under their own direction. Trucks' dozen-piece band just played four sold-out shows at the Beacon; wowed the recent Lockn' Festival in Virginia with a recreation of Joe Cocker's 1970 live album *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*; and recorded a new album at Trucks and Tedeschi's home studio in Jacksonville, Florida. Trucks, a slide-guitar prodigy who led his own bands as a preteen, reveals that he first told the Allmans in 2006 that he wanted to move on: "I said, 'I want to focus on my solo band.' I gave my notice a few times. But the family loyalty pulls you back in."

Haynes' new album, *Ashes and Dust*, recorded with the bluegrass-jam band Railroad Earth, is a return to his roots as a singer-songwriter, growing up in folk clubs like Caesar's Parlor in his hometown, Asheville, North Carolina. "I was 14, and these older cats took me under their wings," Haynes says, citing local stars like Larry Rhodes and Malcolm Holcombe. "Malcolm and I would ride around in his van – he would show me Gordon Lightfoot and JD Souther songs." Even now, Haynes admits, "I listen more to singer-songwriters than guitar players."

Ashes and Dust includes "Spots of Time," a song Haynes wrote with Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh, per-



MIDNIGHT RIDERS
Trucks and Haynes at the Beacon last year

The Other Brothers

The rest of the Allmans have kept lower profiles since the last gig. Here's an update

Gregg Allman

The singer-organist – a liver-transplant survivor – just issued *Back to Macon, GA*, a live solo album made in the Allmans' Seventies hometown, and plans to record a new studio release with producer Don Was.



Jaimoe

The drummer, who played with Sam and Dave, leads Jaimoe's Jasssz Band, a group highlighting the Allmans' improvising roots in Miles Davis and John Coltrane.



Butch Trucks

The drummer plays with Butch Trucks and Very Special Friends and is an instructor at Roots Rock Revival, a jamming-and-camping seminar in the Catskills, with members of the North Mississippi Allstars.



formed live with the Allmans and had hoped the latter would record for a new album. Haynes and Trucks both concede that their inability to marshal the other Allmans back into the studio was a factor in their leaving. "Everybody individually pushed for it – we could never get everybody to push at the same time," Haynes says.

"My uncle would always say, 'This is a live band,'" Trucks says. "I get that on some level. But the Allman Brothers made great studio records back in the day. Between me and Warren, we could have crushed an Allman Brothers record. But even with that, the version with me, Warren and [bassist] Oteil Burbridge had a good 14 years."

That band also had a spring ritual that ended with the Allmans' demise: their annual March residency at the Beacon. Trucks was home this year working in his studio when "it hit me," he says. "Never seen the weather in March in Florida. It's kind of nice."

As for the potential for an Allmans reunion down the line, Haynes is cordially blunt. "I wouldn't close the door on anything," he says. "It's just not something we're talking about." But he and Trucks speak "every few weeks, just to check in," according to the younger guitarist. "Sometimes it's projects. Sometimes it's just to shoot the shit. That dialogue," Trucks adds brightly, "has certainly continued."

CARRIE BROWNSTEIN IS set to release *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*, a vivid memoir focusing on her turbulent, thrilling years as a singer and guitarist in the groundbreaking Nineties punk act Sleater-Kinney – including a harrowing account of the mounting bouts of anxiety that led Brownstein to bring the band to a crashing halt in 2006. “It was arduous,” she says of her two-year writing process. “I had to get up and write every morning, and there’s no magic, mystical quality to that.” Brownstein has more avenues of procrastination open to her than most writers: While working on the book, she also regrouped with Sleater-Kinney singer Corin Tucker and drummer Janet Weiss for this year’s excellent *No Cities to Love* (their first LP in a decade), and shot new seasons of her cable comedy, *Portlandia*, and the Amazon original series *Transparent*. She called during a rare moment of downtime to talk about it all.

There’s a very real possibility that a little over a year from now, Bill Clinton will be back in the White House. Do you think the second Clinton era would be as good for music as the first one was?

I actually think that Republican administrations are better for music. The Reagan era was such a great era for punk and indie rock. So I think we’d have an explosion of passionate, vitriolic music coming out of all genres under Donald Trump, or someone even more intense, like Marco Rubio or Ben Carson.

You write very honestly in your book about the tensions that led to Sleater-Kinney’s breakup in 2006. Were you worried about showing those chapters to your bandmates?

When we were on tour for *No Cities to Love*, Corin and I sat in a hotel room and I read her a couple of chapters. She was really excited. I think one underestimates how flattered people are to be written about. Sleater-Kinney have another round of shows coming in December. What about after that? Would you like to make another album?

I think we’ll definitely get back to writing songs. The band feels like it’s up and running again.

You and Fred Armisen just wrapped Season Six of *Portlandia*. How do you keep things fresh?

Knowing that we only have two seasons left, there’s a real experimental urge coursing through us. We go

Q&A



Carrie Brownstein

The Sleater-Kinney singer-guitarist on her brutally honest memoir, *Portlandia*’s new season, and why covens are cooler than squads

BY SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

into some darker themes this year. Previously we’ve had couples at odds with their community. This year, we put the conflict within the duo itself. **Marijuana is now legal in Portland, where you live. Do people seem more stoned than usual?**

There’s definitely been an influx of stores with really tacky names and horrible aesthetics. I’m particularly talking about vaping stores. It’s like, “Here’s the future, and it was not a dream. It was a nightmare, and it’s very ugly.” And I’m really shocked that the term “maryjane” is still in use. There’s a place here that’s called Mary Jane’s, as if your aunt opened up a little knickknack store, but all the knickknacks are for pot.

On *Transparent*, you play Syd, a close friend of the Pfefferman family who’s there as they grapple with a parent coming out as transgender. What appeals to you about that character?

She’s the voice of reason on the show. I think the audience sees themselves in those supporting characters, because the Pfeffermans are a volatile, fascinating, self-centered family. I like playing someone with a certain stability at the periphery of the madness. And she’s a little more carefree than I am, which is fun.

You tweeted a picture of yourself with your friends Amy Poehler, Aimee Mann and Kim Gordon, and said, “Don’t call us a squad. We’re a fucking coven.” What’s the difference?

None of us are cheerleaders, so I guess we’re not a squad. We just cast spells. But it was mostly in jest.

What have you been listening to?

The records I keep returning to are Tame Impala, Kendrick Lamar and Miguel. I was very surprised by the sound of Miguel’s record – it’s one of the best rock records of the year! And Tame Impala is the record you can immerse yourself in. It’s the sonic sofa of 2015. I just want to sit on it.

You’re great on Twitter, which is considering expanding the 140-character limit on tweets. Good idea or bad?

That’s a *terrible* idea. People barely have anything to say in 140 characters. The last thing we need is a bunch of discursive rambling on Twitter.

The celebrity cat Lil Bub just made an album. You’re a dog person – have your dogs shown any musical potential that you’d like to explore?

No. I would like to build a blockade to prevent my dog, or any other, from making records. Maybe I can have Trump come in and put an immigration wall between my dogs and a recording studio [*laughs*].

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Spader Pushes 'Blacklist' to New Highs

BY ROB SHEFFIELD

NOTHING MIGHT SUM up the crazy times we're living in like the words "James Spader: action hero." But there you go. As *The Blacklist* takes off into its excellent third season, it remains one of a kind: the model for a well-built network cloak-and-dagger caper. So much of *The Blacklist* comes down to Spader as Raymond "Red" Red-

THE BLACKLIST
THURSDAYS, 9 P.M., NBC

dington, a rogue FBI agent who battles the sinister global conspiracy he calls the Cabal. Spader's best trick has always been his poker face, with 50 shades of mellow. But the gentleman spy Red is the perfect role for him: his intense eyes shielded by those manhole-cover lids, his control-freak deadpan, his patrician-stoner smirk. Pretty vacant, as the old song goes.

As Red, Spader uses the FBI as his personal cleaning service, crossing out a different bad guy's name each week while mentoring rookie agent Liz (Megan Boone), who (we think) must be

his daughter. But this season they go on the lam after she guns down an attorney general in cold blood – along with revelations that her mother was a legendary KGB spy. After Liz and Red turn into the two most wanted fugitives in America, she flees to the Russian embassy and announces she's a deep-cover Russian spy. Is she lying? We can't be sure. Of course, Red manages to seem outrageously pleased with himself even when he's running for his life – faced with holing up in a hideout for a week, he muses, "I'll finally get a chance to catch up on some back issues of *Bassmaster*."

It's a bold move for *The Blacklist*: turning into *The Fugitive* after two seasons. But it all depends on Spader's serene arrogance to carry it off week by week. That quality has served him well his whole career, whether he's been playing preppie scum (*Pretty in Pink*) or kinksters (*Secretary*) or cartoon villains (*The Avengers*). But he's never had a cad to play quite like Red.



SPYMASTER
Spader's Red has to go on the lam.



Wilson and West
on Showtime's
The Affair

'The Affair' Gets Darker and Deeper

In the glossary of WASP despair, "John Cheever" is never far from "Chee-tos," and part of what makes *The Affair* worthwhile is the way it embraces the cheese. It's a love story that's also a murder mystery, a smart soap told from multiple points of view. As the first season unfolded, we got to know Noah (Dominic West) and Alison (Ruth Wilson), two unhappily married people falling into a doomed relationship. He's a frustrated writer who finds his well-heeled domestic life stifling; she's

a waitress (and grieving mother) he meets on a summer vacation with the family in the Hamptons. As Season Two begins, the perspective widens, taking in the viewpoints of their long-suffering spouses, Helen (Maura Tierney) and Cole (Joshua Jackson). All four have secrets that are rising to the surface. They all also have clothes that are about to hit the floor. And now that the he-said/she-said story has opened up into a they-said/we-said, *The Affair* is just beginning to hit its stride. **R.S.**

FROM TOP: PETER KRAMER/NBC; MARK SCHAFER/SHOWTIME

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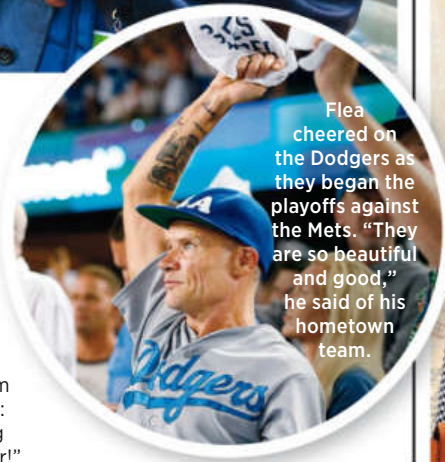
Lena and Jack: Back at Work

In L.A., Lena Dunham and boyfriend Jack Antonoff attended a charity brunch where Dunham gave a speech honoring Judd Apatow for his advocacy on behalf of rape survivors. Dunham just signed a deal to direct a new HBO pilot set in the 1960s magazine industry, and Antonoff is hard at work on the next Bleachers album. "It will include some pieces of the past," he says, "and some very modern elements."



Eddie's Field of Dreams

Eddie Vedder has been a die-hard Chicago Cubs fan since childhood, so he was overjoyed to watch his team come out on top in its playoff series against the St. Louis Cardinals at Wrigley Field. "They're really effing good," Vedder said. "It's a brand-new day!" Vedder will have to take a break from attending games as Pearl Jam head to South America: "I have to leave before the World Series. All I'm saying is, the next few years, we're not gonna play in October!"



Flea cheered on the Dodgers as they began the playoffs against the Mets. "They are so beautiful and good," he said of his hometown team.



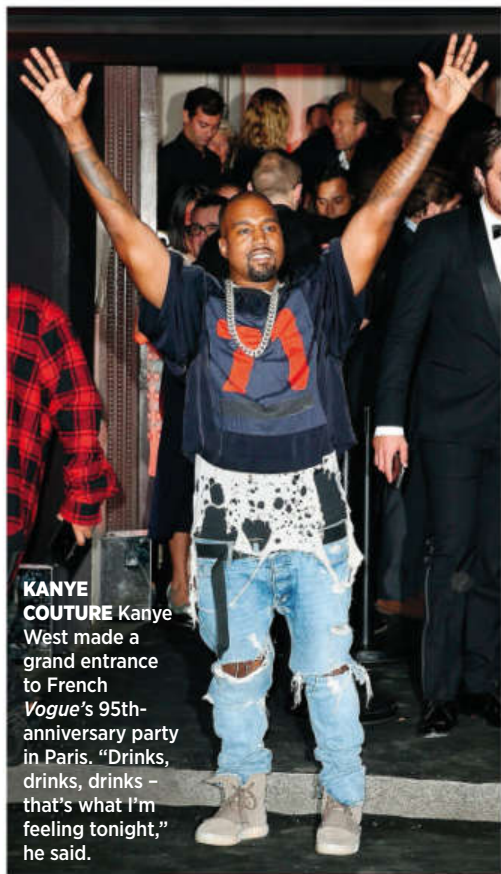
BOWLER'S BANQUET

After hanging out with Jack White at Third Man Records in Nashville, Mick Jagger squeezed in some bowling. "Don't ask me my score!" said Mick.



WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfa watched daughter Jessica Springsteen compete at an L.A. equestrian competition. "They come to a ton of my shows," Jessica said.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DENNIS WIERZBICKI/USA TODAY; SPORTS/SIPA USA; SEAN M. HAFEEY/GETTY IMAGES; GREGG DEGUIRE/WIREIMAGE; ERIC CHARBONNEAU/REX SHUTTERSTOCK; MICK JAGGER/TWITTER



KANYE COUTURE Kanye West made a grand entrance to French *Vogue*'s 95th-anniversary party in Paris. "Drinks, drinks, drinks – that's what I'm feeling tonight," he said.



Beck and Jakob Hit the Canyon

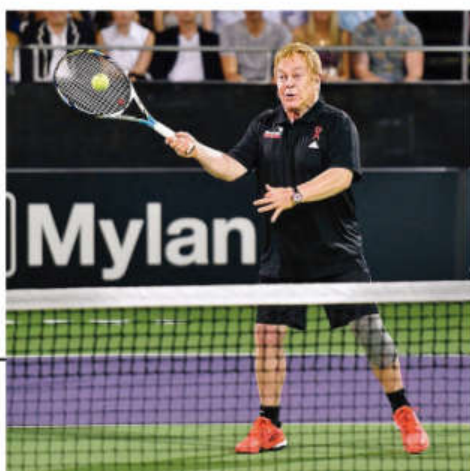
It's been 50 years since the Byrds hit Number One with "Mr. Tambourine Man." To mark the occasion, Jakob Dylan (whose dad had something to do with the song) put together an all-star concert celebrating Sixties Southern California rock, with guests such as Beck, Fiona Apple and Regina Spektor. Dylan invited Beck out for the Byrds' "Goin' Back," explaining jokingly that the two "used to Christmas-carol together."



LIFE OF BRIAN Brian Wilson performed with actor Paul Dano, who played Wilson in the film *Love & Mercy*, at a jazz club in L.A. "I've seen it five times. I love it," says Wilson of the movie. "I like Paul Dano's portrayal of me as a record producer."

I'm Still Serving

Each year, in Las Vegas, Elton John gathers tennis' biggest pros for a match benefiting his AIDS Foundation – and hits the court himself. Next up for Sir Elton are recording sessions with EDM artist Jack Patterson and Sam Smith's songwriter Jimmy Napes.



TWO AMERICAN KIDS New couple John Mellencamp and Christie Brinkley stepped out in New York's Tribeca. Brinkley's ex Billy Joel took note: After performing "The Longest Time" at Madison Square Garden, he proclaimed, "And now she's dating John Mellencamp!"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PIERRE SUU/GETTY IMAGES; SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID BECKER/GETTY IMAGES; KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

The Great Ohio Weed War

Why are corporate raiders and old-school activists locked in a battle for the soul of the marijuana movement?

BY BEN WOFFORD

ON NOVEMBER 3RD, VOTERS IN OHIO WILL DECIDE the fate of legal weed – making the Buckeye State an unlikely ground zero in the national divide of the legalization movement. The fight pits the movement’s ponytailed old guard against its rising carpetbaggers, a cadre of Rolex-wearing, politically connected businessmen intent on controlling the growth, sale and subsequent \$100 million profits of legal weed. Unlike Ohio’s longtime activists, the new weed elite has a \$23.5 million war chest to campaign for dispensaries on every block. But while victory in heartland America would instantly notch the single greatest electoral achievement in marijuana reform, many see the movement’s corporate takeover as the death knell of what has long been a grassroots reform campaign – destroying the last vestiges of the drug’s counterculture relevance.

“New people come into the picture primarily motivated by money, not by a sense of injustice,” says Troy Dayton, a decades-long activist and CEO of the Oakland-based ArcView Group, the country’s largest marijuana-investor group. “And thus you have the problem. I’ve seen the movement fight over a wide range of things. But I’ve never seen something quite like what’s happening in Ohio.”

Without a doubt, the face of the corporate takeover of the marijuana movement is ResponsibleOhio, the statewide campaign that launched last November, the same month Oregon became the fourth state to legalize pot. ResponsibleOhio’s ballot initiative, known as Issue 3, would legalize recreational marijuana by constitutional amendment. The initiative language creates a marijuana oversight board,

allows for 1,100 retailers – more pot shops than the state has Starbucks – and permits each adult citizen four homegrown plants. Issue 3 creates just 10 marijuana farms and hands the keys to wealthy campaign donors, transforming a slew of real-estate executives, financiers and a curious bevy of celebrity investors – NBA legend Oscar Robertson, fashion mogul Nanette Lepore, former boy-band star Nick Lachey – into a monopoly of newfangled marijuana farmers, virtually overnight.

Traditionally in Ohio, legalization has been championed by the movement’s activist class, a loose statewide network of protest politics with names like Ohio Rights Group (ORG) and Legalize Ohio 2016, with most outfits operating in the orbit of the country’s three oldest drug-reform organizations: Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) and the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML). Many of Ohio’s old-school legalization activists describe watching in horror as their cause succumbs

to a big-business stampede. “We’re for full legalization,” says Bob Fittrakis, an Ohio Green Party leader and also an ORG board member. “But this isn’t about that. This is about 10 people with a lot of money...essentially saying, ‘Hi! We’re going to use our money to create a new cartel.’”

For the past four decades, the nonprofit status and equal-justice missions of MPP, DPA and NORML have colored the legalization movement’s identity, but so, too, has political reality: It takes a few million dollars to win a pot campaign. Colorado’s successful initiative cost around \$3 million, and Oregon’s around \$9 million. In the past, such national money veered away from Ohio, an expensive and uncertain battleground state. When your movement dangles on a nonprofit budget, experts explain, you have to pick your states wisely.

ResponsibleOhio has emerged at the precise moment that legalization is grappling with this conundrum: How in the world to finance a movement that’s rocketing at a speed that senior leaders privately confess is faster than they ever expected? Against this dilemma, ResponsibleOhio posed a radical answer: Forget the national leadership and fund yourself. The marijuana market, already an estimated \$2.7 billion industry, long ago went private. But in Ohio, legalization experts say, the marijuana movement itself has gone private.

“In the Ohio case, this is very much a new phenomenon,” says Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of the DPA. “It’s basically investors who are in it for the money. The political reality is that the role of groups that fight for this from a place of principle is just going to diminish very rapidly. And that’s unfortunate.”

THERE’S A SAYING IN AMERICAN politics: “As goes Ohio, so goes the nation.” Fittingly, Ohio’s quest for legalization typifies America’s 40-year journey to the present. Efforts to legalize in Ohio began in 1975,



BALLOT BATTLE Old-guard marijuana activists have charged the group ResponsibleOhio with usurping the legalization movement for corporate profits, rather than for personal freedom or medical need.

when the state joined a wave of nine others to decriminalize possession of small amounts of the plant within four years. But during the Eighties, the Reagan Revolution swept Ohio twice by double digits, and public opinion for legalization flatlined. Beginning in the late Nineties, an Ohio state legislator began introducing symbolic measures at legalization. Finally, in the late 2000s, Ohio activists began taking a cue from legalization's successful referendums, drafting ballot initiatives aimed at legalizing medical marijuana.

For much of the past year, no group has fought juggernaut ResponsibleOhio harder than ORG. In the gaggle of coalitions and alternative politics that make up Ohio's legalization traditionalists, ORG is perhaps first among equals. Its membership tilts boomer, not millennial, a homespun network of gray-haired, grassroots activists that since 2010 has been attempting to bring a statewide initiative to the ballot, one that would legalize medical marijuana.

Though they could hardly be more different, ORG helped birth ResponsibleOhio – and its members aren't sure they like what they see. This past May, months

after the announcement of the legalization ballot initiative, ORG activists brought a complaint to the Ohio Elections Commission, alleging their campaign had been infiltrated. In 2013, ORG was preparing for a ballot campaign for medical marijuana and had begun recruiting a few consultants and pollsters – Ian James volunteered among them, offering the help of his consulting firm, Columbus-based the Strategy Network. But in the months that followed, James began to have other ideas. ORG alleges that with the collusion of others in the group, James started quietly shopping the idea of a rival campaign to a chosen few members. In June of last year, and with little warning, James began

The Ohio marijuana-legalization initiative would create 1,100 retailers – more pot shops than the state has Starbucks.

working for ResponsibleOhio. Legalization had a new heir apparent, and James, with his cavalcade of political connections, was sitting atop the movement.

In the wake of these power moves, James has quickly become the most controversial name in legalization. "There are people who complain because folks are going to become millionaires when this passes," James tells me about his critics, doing a whiny rendition of his adversaries: "I don't like this corporate approach." At 49, James has a tendency to talk like the embattled political pro he is. "For the people who say they can wait" – for a more activist-friendly initiative next year – "they need to get a fucking grip."

James admits that he bears no previous ties to the world of drug reform; a 30-year veteran of Ohio politics, he bills himself as a professional among amateurs. But his campaign has struggled to shed its negative public image – a bandit team of blue bloods who can hardly believe how rich they're about to

get. James' firm will collect at least \$5.5 million in contracts during the campaign. The 23 owners are expected to rein in up to \$100 million in profits, according to one estimate. And their 10 LLCs, the entities that would own each farm, were registered with the secretary of state under numeric identifiers starting with 7682677 – or, on a dial pad, "POTBOSS."

"I've been involved in this for 40 years," says Don Wirtshafter, 63, an ORG member with a white beard and a penchant for Hawaiian shirts (think Santa Claus on holiday in Tijuana). "But this new rush toward greed, it's rolling over all the good work we did. ResponsibleOhio, they sabotaged our campaign, they blackened our name. And now off they go like heroes into their financial scam."

James dismisses the accusations with a snort and says that anyone who is for legalization but not backing Issue 3 is "fucking crazy. Do you or do you not want to end prohibition?" he continues. "And anybody who says no – they need to have their fucking heads examined."

Galvanized by the threat of a hostile takeover, legalization groups began plotting this past summer how to op-

ROLLING STONE REPORTS

pose ResponsibleOhio. “A lot of activists, they’re overwhelmingly against it as bad public policy,” says Sri Kavuru, president of Legalize Ohio 2016. “A lot of people would rather get a ticket than vote for a monopoly.”

In August, Ohio’s legalization saga took another frenzied turn, when law-and-order types in the state created a rival ballot question, directly juxtaposed with RO’s Issue 3. Indeed, called Issue 2, the ballot language is worded simply to prohibit the passage of Issue 3 – “a desperate attempt to derail RO,” says ORG’s Fitrakis. Legalizers and drug warriors alike – just-say-no prohibitionists like pediatrician groups and law enforcement – found themselves allied, wedded by little else but mutual hatred of ResponsibleOhio. Aaron Weaver, president of the pro-legalization Citizens Against ResponsibleOhio, says, “Basically, this group is made up of people that I absolutely despise.” Elise Spriggs, the head of the state’s Drug Free Action Alliance, agrees: “Politics does indeed make strange bedfellows.”

“It’s a bootleggers and Baptist coalition,” explains Mark Keliman, professor of public policy at UCLA and a leading expert on drug policy. Some leaders, disturbed by the battle in Ohio, agree. “I didn’t do this to make a bunch of rich white guys richer,” says one leader of a prominent state’s legalization campaign. “That’s where this is all going. I didn’t sign up for this.”

RESPONSIBLEOHIO HEADQUARTERS operates from Ian James’ 13,000-square-foot Edwardian mansion, a 1904 structure that towers upward from a leafy avenue in the heart of Columbus. A few miles away, ORG occupies a free-standing carriage house, peering at a Chips-N-Go gas station and a local Wendy’s. “People want to put something on the ballot with no money,” says James. “Well, money is the mother’s milk of politics and campaigns.... That’s the way it is.”

James’ breakthrough entails more than hefty coffers: Virtually everyone in the campaign’s brain trust draws from a network of Ohio power politics. Among ResponsibleOhio’s army of consultants are a former messaging strategist for Hillary Clinton and Michael Bloomberg; John Kerry’s campaign lawyer during the Ohio imbroglio of the 2004 election; Rand Paul’s ad guru; and a senior adviser to

Sen. Sherrod Brown. “There’s this moment where people realize that there is money and [political] profit in pot, and it’s not a surprise that those two things are happening concurrently,” says Danny Franklin, a partner with the Benenson Strategy Group, a messaging firm that advised Obama’s presidential campaigns, and who works with drug-reform leaders to research mass incarceration. “How the activists respond is going to be interesting.



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

ResponsibleOhio leader Ian James (top) is the most divisive man in the legalization movement. Outrage ensued when RO revealed weed mascot Buddie (above).

When money is involved, money has a way of winning.”

Whatever the outcome of the Ohio ballot, the era of grassroots legalization is ending, numerous activists say, while the era of corporate campaigns has arrived. To that end, longtime observers say that if victorious, ResponsibleOhio will change the way legalization campaigns are run – and what they’re running for.

“There’s a kind of ‘small is beautiful’ model that many activists would prefer – a microbrew or vineyard model,” Nadel-

mann says. “The people with the largest amount of money as investors prefer restricting the market to a small number of players. For them, big is beautiful.”

But the legalization faithful are not going quietly. Splinter groups have begun to proliferate across the country, vowing to run protest initiatives for the “small is beautiful” approach. In both conviction and comportment, they look strikingly similar to ORG. This month, four

such splinter groups – in Arizona, Maine, California and Massachusetts – announced a fundraising alliance. “It’s the same scenario nationally as it is in Ohio – it’s big money,” says Jason Medar, director of the group Arizonans for Mindful Regulation. “And it’s the same theme everywhere you seem to go: Big Marijuana versus marijuana consumers.”

ONE DAY THIS SUMMER, LEGALIZATION advocate Steve Fox lumbered across the gold-leaf and gilded lobby of Washington’s May-

flower Hotel, where he’d wrapped yet another meeting with a client eager to break ground in the medical-marijuana industry. An activist who was present for nearly every legalization breakthrough in the last decade, Fox was a core architect of Colorado’s amendment; he co-founded the first marijuana trade group, the National Cannabis Industry Association, and now serves as a lawyer with Vicente Sederberg, the country’s first powerhouse marijuana law firm. Fox says he’s preparing to say goodbye to a previous era of activist reform that he helped build, part of a growing legion of influential marijuana reformers who envision a post-2016 landscape in which legalization is propelled even more by industry, not less. Part of the calculus, Fox says, is political realism. “It’s becoming hard to convince the kind of people that have given to MPP in the past to now give a ton of money that’s going to help other people make a ton of profits,” he says.

Across various strata of legalization politics, more players are siding with Fox, but some go a step further. A number of leaders insist that participants in the emerging industry have a moral obligation to contribute to the nonprofit establishment that spent decades fighting for reform, and should fund their campaigns.

“The people making money in the industry, most of them don’t even want to contribute to the cause,” complains Nadelmann, who cited statistics that federal

marijuana arrests are up from last year. “The war on weed in the South and other states, where marijuana arrests are as high as ever – I’m having a hell of a time raising funding working on that issue.”

So far, Nadelmann is asking the industry politely – traipsing through pot-business conferences to explain racial disparities in marijuana arrests to “sensitize” his audience, he says. Yet it’s unclear how much deference – if any – the nouveau riche of private marijuana will pay to the old guard.

Last month, ResponsibleOhio hinted at an answer when the campaign made a miscalculation grave enough to possibly cost it the election. It unveiled the new campaign mascot: Buddie, a grinning, anthropomorphic marijuana superhero. With a large, oblique green head – sporting what appears to be a muscle-tee and a doctor’s coat – Buddie instantly became a lightning rod. Anti-drug warriors took to the news of Buddie with alarm – proof, many said, of corporate marijuana’s intent to sell to children.

For legalizers who had kept their misgivings quiet, Buddie pushed many over the edge. “It’s really irresponsible what they’re doing. At worst, they’re appealing to children. At best, they’re opening our movement to attacks of appealing to children,” says Tom Angell, director of the national persuasion campaign Marijuana Majority, who was driven to oppose ResponsibleOhio by L’affaire Buddie. “It’s them not being privy to the lessons that many of us who worked on this for years have learned in past campaigns.”

Beset on all sides, James again shrugs off criticism of Buddie. “Campaigns are not won based on national endorsements of marijuana advocates,” he says. “The national groups that have some angst about this – well, fuck, people! You weren’t involved in the first place. You’re the ones who took a pass on Ohio because it was too expensive or it was too heavy a lift.” James insists that Buddie was a successful ploy to drive out millennial voters. In his defense, campaign analysts say James will need every vote he can get: A recent poll pegs support for legalization in Ohio at 53 percent, with opposition at 44 percent, a close margin for a ballot initiative.

The closeness of the race presents the national legalization leadership with an opportunity: a final bargaining chip, and a powerful one, to call off the pitchforks with a national endorsement. But despite their chance to land a major swing state, legalization groups, for the most part, have

Meanwhile, NORML has issued a tepid endorsement – emphasizing its disgust with the monopoly. “It was a spirited debate,” said a senior NORML member present for the vote. “This was a qualified endorsement, not an enthusiastic one.” All eyes, then, seemed to fall on MPP. “I think you could make very compelling arguments on all sides of this if you want,” says MPP’s Mason Tvert. This Orwellian nonendorsement has left some members confused. “They want the perception to be that this movement is growing and there are no bumps in the road,” says one leader of a legalization campaign. “They don’t want to admit that there are tensions.”

But in mid-October, back in Columbus, ORG came to a different realization. As a medical-marijuana organization whose primary concern is patients, ORG saw little choice but to endorse Issue 3 and ResponsibleOhio, says Savannah Smith, the group’s young new executive director. In what she described as a “hotly contested” vote, the board elected to campaign in support of Issue 3 – some as unenthusiastically as conscience allows. “I’m so conflicted to my core about it,” says Smith, who stressed that ultimately ORG’s decision was about “bringing relief and treatment to medical patients.” But with ORG’s 180-degree turn on ResponsibleOhio and its splashing its endorsement on its website, it’s hard not to wonder if the long-postponed wedding of marijuana’s past and future had finally arrived in the form of a shotgun marriage.

“A byproduct of all the drug-policy reformers’ efforts of the past 20 years may be the emergence of this legal industry,” says Nadelmann, “and it will probably be that marijuana prohibition ends as a result of the financial interests of the people in the industry.” He pauses and then adds, “And it’s not going to be pretty.”

On this point, James, for the first time, sounded in agreement with the leaders of a movement he’s come to terrify and eventually co-opt. “It’s a new age, one where private organizations and private actors who are working with advocates try to end prohibition,” he says, preparing to join Buddie at another college campus on the tour. “We are heralding a new era.”

The Next States to Fall

Unless you live in the South, recreational weed is coming to a state near you

1 California made history in 1996, when it became the first state to legalize medical marijuana; next November, it will vote to allow recreational weed, and polls indicate the amendment will likely pass. “Then we will have reached the tipping point,” says Angell, of the Marijuana Majority. “And with California having so many members in Congress, it will give a huge boost to our efforts to change federal law.”

2 Maine’s legislators may have rejected recreational marijuana this summer, but the state’s voters have taken measures into their own hands. A signature drive to put legalization on the 2016 ballot is underway, and in the past two years, voters in two of its biggest cities, Portland and South Portland, went ahead and passed referendums in favor of legislation.

3 Massachusetts opened its first medical dispensary this summer, and many believe the state will legalize weed by referendum in 2016. “Polls show voters are poised to pass full legalization next November,” says Angell.

4 Vermont’s attorney general is predicting legalization in 2016. If the marijuana-friendly legislators pass recreational marijuana, they will be the first lawmakers with the political courage to directly challenge federal prohibition, rather than use a ballot initiative to legalize weed.

5 Nevada will almost certainly go green. “Legalization in Nevada seems like a given,” says Amanda Reiman of the DPA. A legalization initiative has already qualified for the 2016 ballot and seems like a lock in a state where self-indulgence is a tourist attraction.

KRISTEN GWYNNE

balked at making an endorsement decision or outright refused. “DPA is not endorsing the Ohio initiative because of our reservations about the oligopoly provision,” says Nadelmann. “But if it passes, it will significantly advance the national movement to end marijuana prohibition. Meanwhile, if it loses, I don’t think that will be much of a setback, given that it’s an off-year election.”

WHY CAN'T WE END MASS INCARCERATION?

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree that Draconian mandatory-minimum sentences have to go – so why is it so hard to pass a bill that will actually make a difference?

★ By Nick Pinto ★

ON OCTOBER 6TH, NEWS reports heralded a historic development: The world's largest incarcerator, the United States of America, was about to make the largest one-time release of prisoners in its history. The U.S. Justice Department announced that it would be releasing some 6,000 inmates from federal prisons before the end of their original sentences. It's the first wave of an even larger number of early releases – more than 13,000 in total. The news was trumpeted as further evidence that after decades of mandatory-minimum sentences, the pendulum of public policy has finally begun to swing back the other way.

But though the news was much hyped in the press, a close look shows just how difficult substantial change in sentencing policy continues to be. For one thing, the announced releases represent a fraction of the more than 205,000 people in federal prison. And federal prisons are just the tip of the iceberg – factor in state prisons and local jails, and there are 2.2 million people locked up in this country. Moreover, the prisoners released in November won't owe their freedom to Congress or to President Obama. The largest prisoner release in U.S. history came instead from an organ of government little known outside of criminal-justice policy circles: the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Composed of seven commissioners, appointed by the president and confirmed by Congress, the

commission is charged with setting and adjusting the detailed schedule of penalties for those convicted of federal crimes.

In April 2014, the commission approved a reduction in sentences for certain drug crimes going forward. "This modest reduction in drug penalties is an important step toward reducing the problem of prison overcrowding at the federal level," said Judge Patti B. Saris, the commission's chair. "Reducing the federal-prison population has become urgent." In July, the commission voted to make those reductions retroactive as well. Prisoners who would have received the lower sentences were eligible to petition judges for early release. Of the more than 17,000 inmates who submitted petitions, a quarter were rejected over fears for public safety.

That the greatest release of federal prisoners in history emanated from a policy tweak by an obscure administrative body says something about just how absent elected officials with far more sweeping powers have been from the reform process. In his final months in office, President Obama has focused more on the need for criminal-justice reform. In the summer, he became the first sitting president to visit a federal prison, and he has used the executive power of clemency to commute some of the most egregiously unfair sentences of 89 federal drug convicts. Under Attorney General Eric Holder, the Justice Department began telling prosecutors that their mandate is not to hit every defendant with the heaviest penalty they can, but rather to seek a nuanced and individualized justice.

But a handful of pardons don't amount to much when there are hundreds of thousands of federal prisoners, and an attorney general's directive for prosecutors to show a modicum of restraint isn't guaranteed to outlast this administration. "All roads to meaningful sentencing reform pass through Congress," says Julie Stewart, president and founder of Families Against Mandatory Minimums. "If there's going to be meaningful federal-sentencing reform, it can only come from there. And until recently, Congress hasn't been interested."

FOR DECADES, BEGINNING IN THE 1980s, members of Congress and senators on both sides of the aisle were very interested in federal sentencing – *specifically*, in making sentences longer and making it harder for judges to tailor their sentences to the case at hand. As the War on Drugs was kicking into high gear in the Eighties, Congress created a host of new mandatory-minimum penalties. By forcing judges to apply unprecedented harsh sentences, the logic went, mandatory-minimum laws would standardize punishments and offer a strong disincentive to people contemplating committing drug crimes. The rest is history: The federal-prison population swelled from 24,000 prisoners in 1980 to 219,000 in 2013. Nearly half of federal inmates are serving time for drug crimes. Of those, 60 percent were subject to mandatory minimums when they were sentenced.

In recent years, though, popular enthusiasm for the drug war has waned,



the astronomical price tag of imprisoning hundreds of thousands of people has shocked even the toughest-on-crime politicians, and a reconsideration of mandatory-minimum sentences and mechanisms of mass incarceration is no longer quite the political third rail that it once was. This sea change is due largely to a shift among Republicans, led by reform-minded groups like Right on Crime and conservative luminaries like Newt Gingrich, Rand Paul and the Koch brothers. "Things that weren't possible a few years ago are suddenly seeming possible," says Stewart, of FAMM. "The reason is that people on the right are coming around."

Some conservative converts to criminal-justice reform realize that locking up so many citizens consumes a stupefying amount of taxpayer dollars. Others feel a religious call. The late Charles Colson, the former special counsel to Richard Nixon, became an evangelical Christian shortly before his own seven-month

bid as one of the Watergate Seven, and afterward founded the Prison Fellowship, which touts itself as "the nation's largest outreach to prisoners." As Republican leader in the California Assembly in the 1980s, Patrick Nolan had a strict tough-on-crime position until he found himself in federal prison on corruption charges. "I went in thinking that the system made us safer by helping to change inmates," Nolan says. "I went to prison and saw they were doing very little to change the behavior of these young guys. That was a shock. What have you accomplished other than tearing apart their families, making it harder to employ them, and costing the taxpayers a lot of money?" Nolan now runs the Center for Criminal Justice Reform at the American Conservative Union Foundation, and he has been a major driver of the GOP's embrace of criminal-justice reform. "We've built a movement," he says. "The conservative grassroots care very much about this, and they're in it for the long haul."

The new bipartisan consensus now looks to be finally breaking the logjam on Capitol Hill. On the morning of October 1st, half a dozen of the most powerful Democratic and Republican senators gathered for a news conference to announce new legislation titled "The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015." Calling it "the biggest criminal-justice reform in a generation," Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley hailed it as a true product of negotiation, containing provisions that each side disliked even as it was agreeable to all.

"The bill certainly doesn't contain everything we might have dreamed of, but there's a lot to like in it," says Jeremy Haile, federal advocacy counsel for the Sentencing Project. The bill requires that juveniles sentenced as adults be eligible for parole. It allows terminally ill and elderly inmates with no violent record to be released from prison. It mandates the Bureau of Prisons to provide inmates with

programming shown to reduce recidivism. Some of the bill's biggest impacts concern sentencing reform: It reduces the "three strikes" penalty that saddled three-time drug convicts with life sentences. The bill also finally makes retroactive the reductions contained in the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, which lowered the patently racist discrepancy between crack and powder-cocaine sentences.

President Obama was clearly pleased to see the legislation and praised the bill as historic: "The broad and impressive bipartisan coalition that created the bill makes me optimistic that members on both sides of the aisle, in both houses, will continue to work together on this critical issue in the coming weeks and months and put a

ate, Grassley condemned an earlier iteration of the legislation, decrying the "Orwellian rhetoric" of the "leniency industrial complex." As long as Grassley was Judiciary chair, it seemed, sentencing reform was dead in the water.

But something happened between March and October: Grassley found that his inflexible tough-on-crime posture wasn't playing as well with his constituents as it used to. In April, 130 faith leaders from Grassley's home state of Iowa wrote an open letter to the senator, urging him to reconsider. Just over a week later, an ecumenical trio of Iowa bishops blasted the policy in the pages of *The Des Moines Register*, and soon after, the paper's editorial board piled on. "This nation's war on drugs

thing was on the table, but I was against a 50 percent across-the-board reduction."

The negotiations, which had begun last fall, ramped up with Grassley's participation in March. "We had to sit down and start walking through what we were trying to achieve and what he was comfortable with," Sen. Dick Durbin, the Illinois Democrat who was a driving force behind the legislation, tells RS. "It took a year."

THE SENATE BILL MAY REPRESENT progress, but of course the mere fact of its introduction guarantees nothing. The backing of leaders from both parties would seem to assure that the bill will get out of the Judiciary Committee and to a vote

“THE SENATE IS THE EASY PART. IT’S IN THE U.S. HOUSE, THE CLOTTED EPICENTER OF GOVERNMENT DYSFUNCTION, THAT SENTENCING REFORM WILL FACE ITS REAL TEST.”

meaningful criminal-justice reform bill on my desk before the end of this year.”

For longtime prison-reform advocates, though, the legislation leaves a lot to be desired. It does nothing to eliminate the institution of mandatory-minimum sentences, the holy grail of sentencing reform, and in fact creates new mandatory-minimum requirements for domestic violence and arms trafficking. Though legislators declined to discuss on the record details of the months-long negotiation process that produced the legislation, it's a safe bet that a major reason the Senate's bill doesn't do more is Sen. Grassley. As chair of the Judiciary Committee, Grassley was in a position to kill any legislation softening mandatory-minimum sentences, and as recently as March, he was publicly committed to doing just that. In a lengthy and emphatic speech on the floor of the Sen-

focused on criminal punishment instead of treatment [and] has been a complete failure," the board wrote. "At long last there is growing support for changing that. Iowa's senior senator should not stand in the way."

Grassley tells *ROLLING STONE* that he was brought around by studying the experience of states that have embraced prison reforms and seeing that they haven't suffered for doing so. "I've learned from what some states have done, changes could be made and money could be saved and not hurt society with people that do harm coming from behind bars," he says. But Grassley concedes that there was another reason he realized he had to get involved in the process – to keep more dramatic mandatory-minimum reform from carrying the day: "I saw the possibility that mandatory minimums could be cut in half. I thought that was going to be bad. Every-

in the Senate this fall without getting cut to ribbons, larded up with extraneous additions or sabotaged with poison-pill amendments. The hard-fought negotiations behind the legislation have produced something approaching unicorn status on Capitol Hill: a substantial bill with bipartisan support. "The fact that they were able to come together and produce a bipartisan bill is a huge development," says Nancy La Vigne, of the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center. The senators know they're sitting on a rare piece of evidence that the American legislature might not be wholly and irremediably broken.

But the Senate is the easy part. It's in the U.S. House, the seething, clotted epicenter of government dysfunction, that sentencing reform will face its real test. Until recently, the passage of sentencing-reform legislation has been blocked by a GOP Ju-

FROM LEFT: FABIODEVILLA/SHUTTERSTOCK; BEZANGI/SHUTTERSTOCK; JULIA IVANTSOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK; JOE HUGHES/CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL; LEE SHARPE; EVERETT COLLECTION; JARED AMES; PAUL SANCYA/AP IMAGES

THREAT ASSESSMENT THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SCARY

WITH US

- Ben Bernanke: More **Wall Street** **excess** should have done time.
- Mealworms can safely consume **Styrofoam**.
- Deficit shrinks more than **\$40 billion**, to \$435 billion.
- California passes historic **wage-equality** act.
- California commits to 50 percent **renewable power** by 2030.
- MacGyver** coming back to TV.
- Prison debate team beats **Harvard**.
- Biden burns GOP: "There's **homophobes** still left. Most of them are running for president, I think."



HISTORIC TOUR
This summer, Obama became the first sitting president to visit a prison.

diciary chairman, Bob Goodlatte of Virginia. “We shouldn’t jump to conclusions about what is right and what is wrong with [mandatory-minimum drug sentences] yet,” Goodlatte said on C-Span last year.

Last June, when the political odd couple of Virginia Democrat Bobby Scott and Wisconsin Republican Jim Sensenbrenner brought forward the SAFE Justice Act, a sprawling reform bill that explicitly reserved mandatory-minimum drug sentences for kingpins, Goodlatte opposed it. But with his own committee sponsoring legislation without his approval, and Speaker John Boehner announcing his support of the bill, pressure was mounting on Goodlatte to do something. (Goodlatte’s office declined interview requests.) Leading into the summer recess, Goodlatte promised that he and ranking Democrat John Conyers would present their own bipartisan criminal-justice reform bill when Congress reconvened in September. But the month came and went, and no legisla-

tion emerged. It was only after the Senate unveiled its bill that Goodlatte and Conyers hurriedly announced that they were putting forward companion legislation – effectively identical to the Senate’s.

With the recent chaos in House leadership, the bill’s fate is uncertain. “Guessing how House Republicans are going to act is extremely difficult,” says Danyelle Solomon, of the Brennan Center for Justice. “It depends on who their next speaker is, and what their priorities are going to be before we can discuss how this moves forward.”

Unfortunately, time isn’t a resource in great abundance for the passage of a sentencing-reform bill. Next year is a federal election year, and it’s only a matter of months before that process sucks all the air out of Washington. “If we’re going to get enactment before the election grinds everything else to a halt, it’s going to have to be the House acting on the Senate bill before the year is out,” predicts Haile, of the Sentencing Project.

WITH ALL OF THE NEGOTIATION and speculation at the policy level, it’s easy to forget the real lives that are at stake here. Stephanie George was a 26-year-old mother of three when she was convicted on drug-conspiracy charges because the man she was dating had kept drugs and money in her house. George had previously pleaded guilty to state charges that she’d sold \$160 worth of cocaine to a police informant, so under the federal three-strikes-and-you’re-out law, she was sentenced to life in prison. George was locked up nearly 18 years before Obama commuted her sentence, along with a handful of other nonviolent drug offenders. One of her sons died shortly before her release. Out for more than a year now, George is still struggling to find a good job, to reconnect with her remaining children and to rebuild her life. She says she doesn’t think most politicians consider the costs a mandatory-minimum sentence brings, the widening circles of suffering and loss that ripple out from a case like hers.

“I would definitely tell them that they need to do away with the mandatory minimum,” she says. “I don’t think they’re thinking about the damage that this does to the kids and to the family. Not everyone who has made a mistake needs to have a life sentence.”

For the tens of thousands of federal prisoners spending decades of their lives behind bars on a mandatory-minimum sentence, the stakes for meaningful reform could not be higher. And even if the legislation does pass before the end of the year, advocates say, it’s only a beginning. “This is a first step,” says Molly Gill, government affairs counsel of FAMM. “We still will have mandatory minimums. Unless we significantly reduce the number of drug prosecutions, the math is inevitable: Over time, we’re going to keep filling up our prisons.”

TOP: EVAN VUCCI/AP IMAGES; BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: JOAO VIRSSIMO/SHUTTERSTOCK; LORI MARTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK; MARK SAGLOCCO/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL JAY BERLIN/SHUTTERSTOCK; IRANIAN DEFENSE MINISTRY/AP IMAGES; VIKTOR KUNZ/SHUTTERSTOCK; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY “ROLLING STONE”; “RICE FAMILY”; EYEUBUITOUS/UG/GETTY IMAGES



AGAINST US

Record coral death – five percent gone in 2015 alone.

Playboy to stop publishing nudes.

Rupert Murdoch: Ben Carson could be nation’s first **“real black”** president.

49 percent of Americans have **\$0 in savings**.

Iran test-fires long-range ballistic missile.

Only in America: Two-year-old finds gun, shoots his **grandma**.

Police reports: **Tamir Rice** shooting “justified.”

Warming could cause **Antarctic ice shelves** to collapse by 2100.



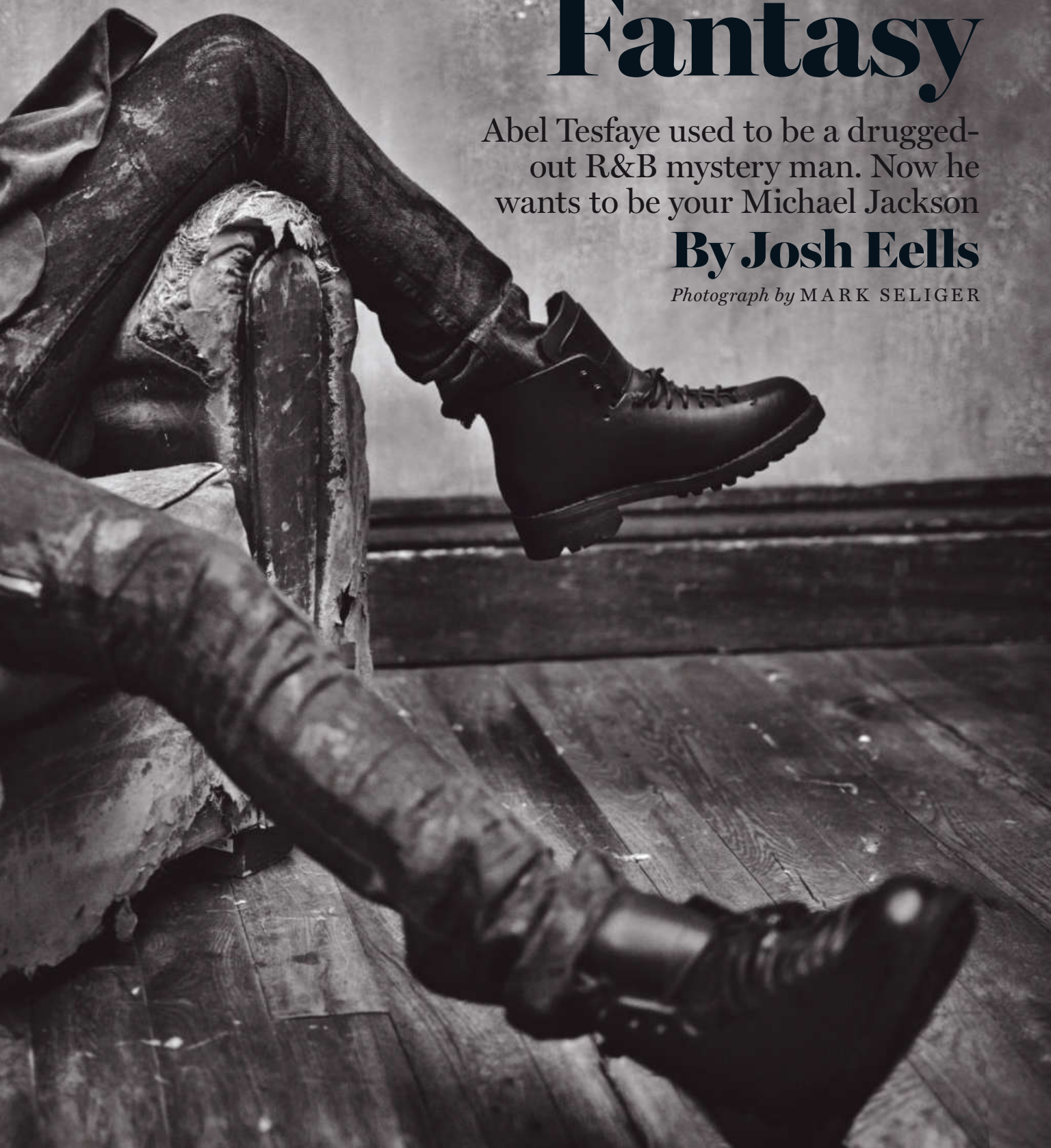
WICKED GAMES
Teyfaye in New
York in October

The Weeknd's Dark Twisted Fantasy

Abel Tesfaye used to be a drugged-out R&B mystery man. Now he wants to be your Michael Jackson

By Josh Eells

Photograph by MARK SELIGER



S

O IS THIS SWEARING or no swearing?" In a darkened soundstage on the outskirts of London, Abel Tesfaye is wondering if he can say "fuck" or not. Tesfaye, better known as breakout pop sensation the Weeknd, is at a rehearsal for *Later... With Jools Holland*, the BBC music show, about to sound-check his smash hit "The Hills," a four-minute horror-movie booty call featuring more than a dozen f-bombs. For Tesfaye, that's relatively clean, but he knows the pensioners in Twickenham might disagree. So when the verdict comes back "no swearing," he nods and smoothly pivots to a censored version – a small gesture that says a lot about the kind of professional he has become.

"The Hills" is currently enjoying its fourth straight week at Number One, a feat made even more impressive because it took the place of another Weeknd track, "Can't Feel My Face" – Spotify's official song of the summer, and the only song about cocaine ever to be lip-synced by Tom Cruise on network TV. Tesfaye is just the 12th artist in history to score back-to-back Number Ones, a group that includes Elvis Presley, the Beatles and Taylor Swift. His new album, *Beauty Behind the Madness*, has sold more than half a million copies in a couple of months, and he's preparing to launch a national arena tour in November. "I'm still digesting it, to be honest with you," Tesfaye says of his success. "But the screams keep getting louder, dude."

Tesfaye comes over to say hi, dressed in black Levi's and a Roots hoodie, his tsunami of hair piled high atop his head. "Sorry, I'm sick," he says, as his handshake becomes a fist bump in midair. Since starting this promo tour a week ago, he's been to Las Vegas, Paris, Berlin and now London. The cold caught up with him yesterday, during a signing for 500 squealing fans at the Oxford Circus HMV. (Overheard: "I wanted to hug him!" "You didn't hug him? I kissed him!")

This scene would not have seemed possible in 2011, when the Weeknd appeared

with a trio of cult-favorite mixtapes that established both his sonic template – drug-drenched, indie-rock-sampling, sex-dungeon R&B – and his mysterious, brooding persona. A press-shy Ethiopian kid from Toronto who has given only a handful of interviews, he has cultivated a near-mythical image as a bed-hopping, pill-popping, chart-topping cipher. "We live in an era when everything is so excessive, I think it's refreshing for everybody to be like, 'Who the fuck is this guy?'" Tesfaye says. "I think that's why my career is going to be so long: Because I haven't given people everything."

Spend just five minutes with him, though, and he reveals himself: sweet, soft-spoken, surprisingly earnest. When I tell him he's not what I expected, he nods. "When people meet me, they say that I'm really kind – contrary to a lot of my music."

When talking about his art and his career, Tesfaye is blessed with a towering self-confidence and has no hesitation about declaring his own greatness. "People tell me I'm changing the culture," he says. "I already can't turn on the radio. I think I'm gonna drop one more album, one more powerful body of work, then take a little break – go to Tokyo or Ethiopia or some shit." Hearing him boast about talking shop with Bono, or name-dropping "Naomi Campbell, who's a good friend of mine now," you may be tempted to see a diva in the making; or you may see a 25-year-old guy who's stoked and incredulous to be in the position he's in.

After rehearsal, Tesfaye is in the greenroom with his two managers, 31-year-old Amir "Cash" Esmailian and 35-year-old Tony Sal. Cash is a first-generation Iranian-Canadian sweetheart who occasionally yells things into the phone like, "You may as well bend me over a table, bro!"; Sal is a courtly charmer who grew up in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war and now dates a former Miss USA. Right now, they're trying to figure out how to get from Norway, where Tesfaye will be for promo in a few days, to Texas, where he has a show. According to their tour manager, the only commercial flight from Oslo to Austin is at 8 a.m.

"What about noncommercial?" asks Cash. The tour manager says he'll check, but they're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Cash looks around and grins: "The label's paying for it, right?"

I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER today. I feel amazing right now."

The next afternoon, Tesfaye is in a seventh-floor suite at his Soho hotel, having spent most of the previous 18 hours in bed. (There was also a B12 shot involved.) When a bellman brings in a silver tray with a selection of waters, Tesfaye pours himself a glass. "I just started being fancy, to be honest," he says. "Like, I just started learning how to pronounce what I'm wearing." He imitates a snooty shopgirl: "It's not Bal-mane, it's Bal-mahn." "Oh, sorry!"

When he first started recording as the Weeknd, Tesfaye was an unlikely star. "I was everything an R&B singer wasn't," he says. "I wasn't in shape. I wasn't a pretty boy. I was awkward as fuck. I didn't like the way I looked in pictures – when I saw myself on a digital camera, I was like, 'Eesh.'" Instead of his face, his album art and videos featured black-and-white photos of artful nudes – a topless girl in a bathtub, a woman's ass in a party dress. The aesthetic was American Apparel-style hipster catnip, right down to the Helvetica font.

Early Weeknd songs were atmospheric and chilly, their thick narcotic haze sliced by his broken-glass falsetto. The lyrics were an addiction counselor's worst nightmare: pills, pain, shame, serotonin, danger. He and his crew posted three songs on YouTube and started spamming their friends on Facebook, then watched the play counts slowly climb. "I don't know how many it actually was, but it felt like a million," Tesfaye says. "Five hundred plays? Holy shit!" Toronto being a small town in some ways, the songs were heard by Drake's manager, Oliver El-

Khatib, who posted them to the OVO blog, where they promptly blew up. "Apparently, Drake wasn't even fucking with it at first," Tesfaye says today. "Oliver was the one vouching for me."

The then-anonymous Tesfaye declined all interviews. In part, it was because he worried he wasn't well-spoken enough: A high school dropout, he used to do crossword puzzles to improve his vocabulary, and to this day, he often wishes he were more articulate. "Me not finishing school

"I was everything an R&B singer wasn't," he says. "I wasn't in shape, or a pretty boy. When I saw myself on a camera, I was like, 'Eesh.'"

Contributing editor JOSH EELLS wrote about David Letterman in May.



WEEKND WARRIOR (1) With his girlfriend, model Bella Hadid. **(2)** With early supporter Drake, who featured Tesfaye on his double-platinum 2011 album, *Take Care*. **(3)** With Bulleez N Nerdz partner Jesse Ray in Toronto, 2009.

– in my head, I still have this insecurity when I’m talking to someone educated,” he says. “I don’t want them looking at me like this fucking retard – no disrespect.” For months, no one even knew if the Weeknd was a person or a group. That’s when Tesfaye realized he “could run with the whole enigmatic thing,” he says now. “If it backfired, I probably *would* have been doing interviews. But people were kind of liking me being a fucking weirdo.”

The three free mixtapes that followed – *House of Balloons*, *Thursday* and *Echoes of Silence* (all later repackaged and sold as *Trilogy*) – made him a darling of indie circles, and Tesfaye isn’t shy about praising them. “I probably could have toured off *Trilogy* for the rest of my life,” he says. “It definitely changed the culture. No one can do a trilogy again without thanking the Weeknd. A lot of artists started doing things faster and quicker after that: Justin

Timberlake dropped two albums in a year, Beyoncé dropped a surprise album.” He’s equally proud of the music itself: “I’m not gonna say any names, but just listen to the radio. Every song is *House of Balloons* 2.0.”

Drake gave Tesfaye a big boost when he featured the Weeknd on his double-platinum 2011 album, *Take Care*. But for Tesfaye, being under the wing of his fellow Torontonians was a mixed blessing: A handful of songs he’d written for *House of Balloons* ended up on *Take Care*. As Tesfaye said in a 2013 interview, “I was hungry.... I was like, ‘Dude, take anything.’” Today, he says he has nothing but gratitude for Drake, whom he calls “my closest friend in the industry at that time.” Still, he says, “I gave up almost half of my album. It’s hard. I will always be thankful – if it wasn’t for the light he shined on me, who knows where I’d be. And everything happens for a reason.” That said: “You never know what I would say if this success wasn’t in front of me now.”

It wasn’t long before the major labels came calling. But even then, few would have pegged Tesfaye for the global superstar he is now – least of all him. “Never in a million years,” he says. “At the time, I thought I’d be a punk star – grow my hair out, acne on my face, super-fucking-skinny. I was looking at artists like Iggy Pop

and the Ramones, or Afro-punk. But you evolve and realize your potential. And then it’s like, ‘*Fuck yeah*. Let’s go.’”

AND NOW, A FEW WORDS about the hair:

The Weeknd’s hair is by far his most recognizable trait. There are Tumblrs and website listicles devoted to it; when I told the immigration agent at Heathrow what I was doing in the U.K., he said, “That’s the geezer with all the hair, innit?”

Tesfaye’s hair can be divided into roughly four sectors, each with its own distinct personality (front left: flopped-over moose antler; back left: tiny octopus). The overall effect is that of a rare double mullet: party in the front, party in the back. There’s not much to maintaining it, he says – just a hard shampoo every once in a while. But there are other annoying parts. “Sleeping. I wake up with neck pains sometimes. And not being able to hide myself.”

Tesfaye says the hair was partly inspired by Jean-Michel Basquiat. He began growing it out four years ago: “I want to be remembered as iconic and different,” he says. “So I was like, ‘Fuck it – I’m gonna let my hair just be what it wants.’ I’ll probably cut it if it starts interfering with my sight. I can kind of see it right now. But if I cut it, I’d look like everyone else. And that’s just so boring to me.”

Tesfaye’s hair also prompted one of his most WTF celebrity encounters. He was at a party for Sam Smith after this year’s Grammys, at an \$80 million mansion in Bel-Air. Katy Perry and Ed Sheeran were there; Disclosure were DJ’ing. “Everyone was hammered,” Tesfaye says. “Sam had just won, like, every Grammy, so he was having the time of his life. Max Martin actually left because everyone was so drunk. Unfortunately, that was the one month I decided to stop drinking. Everybody was having a great time, all these cool things were happening, and I was shaking, like – ‘Fuck, I really want a drink.’”

That’s when he met Taylor Swift. “She actually schooled me on my own shit,” Tesfaye says. “She was like, ‘I’ve been listening to ‘The Morning’ [from *House of Balloons*] for years – it’s one of my favorite songs ever!’ I mean, she might have just Googled it. But she seemed genuine.”

Tesfaye says Swift went on for about 15 minutes. “But the whole time she was talking,” he says, “she was kind of, like, petting my hair? I think she was just drawn to it – she must have been a little gone off a few drinks. And of course I’m not going to be like, ‘Hey, can you stop?’ I mean, it felt good! But when she started petting my hair, that’s when I was like, ‘I definitely need a drink.’”

ANYONE WHO’S HEARD THE Weeknd sing or seen his stage moves knows the debt he owes to Michael Jackson. He often says it was Jackson’s music that made him want to be a singer, and the lyrics to “Dirty Diana” that made him want to write songs. But Jackson was even more important to his family than to most, because of their East African roots. “People forget – ‘We Are the World’ is for Ethiopia,” he says. “At home, if it wasn’t Ethiopian music, it was Michael. He was our icon.”

Tesfaye’s mother, Samra, emigrated from Ethiopia in the 1980s and settled with her mother in Scarborough, a drab neighborhood on the east side of Toronto. She juggled several jobs – nurse, catering, plus night school – and when she was home, she’d baby her only child. “I’m a mama’s boy,” Tesfaye admits. “Everything good, I get from my mother.” He was a quiet kid, and a little lonely sometimes. “I always wanted a brother so I’d have somebody to play with,” he says. “I remember lying to people that I had brothers – that’s how much I wanted one.”

Tesfaye’s mother and grandmother lived through Ethiopia’s so-called Red Terror, after Emperor Haile Selassie’s death, during which tens of thousands of civilians were killed by a military junta. But they never talked about it, and Tesfaye doesn’t know much of the history. “I actually wish Bono was here to school us both on it,” he jokes. “He knows more about Africa than any African I’ve ever met. I remember hearing some stories from my uncles – they would chew *chat* and talk. But I don’t think my mom wanted to tell those stories. I don’t think Ethiopians want their kids to feel like Ethiopia is a bad place.”

Because his mother worked so much, his grandmother took care of him a lot, taking him to services at their Ethiopian Orthodox church. (“It’s almost Islamic.

There’s a lot of bowing.”) His first language was Amharic, not English, and he says his high-flying vocal style was influenced by *habesha* singers like Aster Aweke. He still loves Ethiopian food: “It’s the best, man. But it’s very fattening. I think I’m still burning off that fat, to be honest. For an Ethiopian mother, if you have a chubby kid, it means you’re doing something good.” Tesfaye recently bought his mother a “huge house” in Toronto. “I think me getting my diploma would make her much happier, though.”

Tesfaye doesn’t know much about his father beyond his name: Makkonen, also Tesfaye’s middle name. The elder Tesfaye took off when Abel was one or two: “I saw him vaguely when I was six, and then again when I was 11 or 12, and he had a new family and kids. I don’t even know where he lived – I’d see him for, like, a night. I’m sure he’s a great guy. I never judged him. He wasn’t abusive, he wasn’t an alcoholic, he wasn’t an asshole. He just wasn’t there.”

Tesfaye was an up-and-down student. Until eighth grade, he was in French-immersion class, which meant he had to speak French all day. (“It sucked. At recess, all the regular kids made fun of us – they called us ‘Frenchies.’”) His mother sent him to piano lessons for a while, but he preferred pop music. He grew up in a golden age of R&B when Aaliyah, Missy Elliott, Timbaland and the Nephewettes were all over BET. “The late Nineties really formed my style – that sexy downtempo vibe,” he says. Later he got into rap – especially 50 Cent, whose debut came out when Tesfaye was 11 – and in middle school, he started smoking weed, so soon Hendrix and Led Zeppelin were in

the mix. “I was the kid wearing the Pink Floyd shirt and listening to Ginuwine in my ear,” he says.

When he was 17, Tesfaye says, he got kicked out of his school for “some incident” that he can’t remember. He had to transfer to a rougher school across town, away from all his friends. “Imagine starting all over at Grade 11? Fuck that – *peace*.” He lasted six months before dropping out and leaving home, and he and two friends moved into a one-bedroom house at 65 Spencer Avenue, in an up-and-coming Toronto neighborhood called Parkdale. “It was amazing,” Tesfaye says. “No parents, we can do what we want, stay up as late

as we want – like, literally for days.” Two blocks away was a strip of hip bars and clubs. “We kind of put that part of the city on,” Tesfaye says. “We were legends on that street. If you go there now, it’s all these little 18-year-old kids that look like me.”

(Tesfaye says 65 Spencer inspired the title *House of Balloons*. “We’d throw these shitty parties and have girls over, and we’d try to make it celebratory, so we’d have balloons,” he says. Another possible explanation: The Victorian house, with its white columns and gabled roof, looks a lot like the house of balloons from Pixar’s *Up*, which came out around that time.)

Tesfaye had long wanted to be a musician, and he started pursuing it in earnest. He formed a hip-hop duo called Bulleez N Nerdz, rapping under the name Kin Kane. (Abel = kin to Cain.) Later, he joined a local production team called the Noise and wrote songs he imagined being performed by Justin Timberlake, Drake and Chris Brown. He also started partying a lot. “I never needed detox or anything,” he says. “But I was addicted in the sense of ‘Fuck, I don’t want to spend this day without getting high.’” For a while he was homeless and couch-surfing; he didn’t talk to his mom for a year. “Like, ’08 to 2010 – those are my hazy years,” Tesfaye says. “I have this lyric that goes, ‘I’m not scared of the fall/I’ve felt the ground before.’ And in this industry, I’m not really scared of failing, because I already know what it means to be on the ground.”

ONE NIGHT, TESFAYE IS joined in London by his girlfriend, Bella Hadid, the 18-year-old runway model and *Real Housewives* daughter. (She’s also an Olympic hopeful who is training to qualify for the 2016 Games in three equestrian events, which is apparently news to Tesfaye. “I read that!” he says. “I hope she does. I’ve never seen her do it, but word on the street is she’s bangin’ at it.”)

Hadid (whose older sister is budding supermodel Gigi) just arrived from Milan Fashion Week, where she walked in four shows. Now she’s hanging backstage with the crew, waiting for Tesfaye to get back, smoking cigarettes and eating chicken wings in a tight red dress. One of the guys asks what she’s up to. “I go to Paris tomorrow,” she says. “I can’t wait.” Tesfaye just bought her a puppy for her upcoming 19th birthday – a little black Yorkie named Hendrix. “But I’m probably going to end up taking care of it,” he says.

Tesfaye and Hadid have been dating since last April. “I actually asked her to be on the artwork for *Beauty Behind the Madness*,” Tesfaye says. “My motive was literally to work with her.” But when she

“People forget – ‘We Are the World’ is for Ethiopia,” says Tesfaye about his Michael Jackson obsession. “He was our icon.”

declined, “I was like, ‘All right, cool – we can meet up face-to-face.’” Tesfaye says he loves how hardworking she is, and how close she is with her family. “It just kind of fell into my lap,” he says. “If this had happened two years ago – well,” he catches himself, “she couldn’t.” (Two years ago, Hadid would have been 16.) “But if I’d met someone two years ago, I probably would’ve fucked it up. But I’m more – how do I say it? – clear-thinking now.”

In his music, Tesfaye has presented a conflicted, frequently cold view of women and relationships. On Drake’s “Crew Love,” he brushes off a girl who dares to distract him from his art (“Take your nose off my keyboard/What you bothering me for?”). On “Often,” he brags about turning a woman’s erogenous zone into a meteorological phenomenon.

Tesfaye says the sex in his music is mostly autobiographical. “I mean, no girl has ever actually rained,” he says. “But if that’s not what you mean, then yeah. I don’t want to sound like that guy where sex is not an obstacle. But I’ve had a lot of sex.”

Tesfaye lost his virginity when he was 16. A friend in college took him to a toga party, and he told a girl he was a student at nearby York University. “I could have been a student at fuckin’ McDonald’s, she was so drunk,” he says. “I was drunk too. It was the worst experience of my life. Losing your virginity to an older woman sounds good, but it was kinda like, ‘Oh shit, it’s done?’” In general, he says, he “wasn’t a ladies’ man – it was nothing like it is now.” He quotes the rapper Mike Jones: “The line ‘Back then, ho’s didn’t want me/ Now I’m hot, ho’s all on me’ is definitely relevant.”

Part of the allure of the Weeknd’s music is its emotional chilliness – the way he creates a world that sounds both sexy and numbed-out. Next to his darkest songs, an R. Kelly track can seem almost wistfully romantic. The debauchery can have a creepy undercurrent: Tesfaye’s songs, especially the early ones, occasionally depict troubling situations, like on 2011’s “High for This,” where he sings about getting a girl wasted before having sex with her. “Everything is consent,” Tesfaye insists. “The tone is dark, the environment is the dark. But there’s not force in it. They want to have a good time. Everybody wants

to be there. Whether they regret their choices *after* is whatever. But everybody is in consent.”

There’s a more disturbing dynamic at work on 2011’s “Initiation,” where Tesfaye’s narrator implies that before a girl can be with him, she has to sleep with the rest of his crew.

“Back then, it was like, ‘Hey, you want to fucking hang out? Here’s my boys,’”

would launch him to the next level, but it didn’t take off. “It humbled me a bit,” he says. “I can be honest about it. Nobody wants to put out music where the reception’s not great.” Tesfaye considered moving to Seattle, where the depressing vibes might inspire something interesting. But he wound up in L.A. instead. “No matter how dark my experiences were during *Trilogy*, it’s nothing like L.A.,” he says.

“L.A. is dark.”

Tesfaye is back in Los Angeles tonight, having landed early this morning. He’s still jet-lagged, sipping an Old Fashioned at a steakhouse downstairs from his hotel. He actually rents a house in town, in the Hollywood Hills, but he doesn’t like staying there. “I think it’s haunted, to be honest with you,” he says. “I’ve had sleep paralysis. I hear voices sometimes. I heard the Hills are over Indian burial ground. But maybe it’s just the wind.”

Tesfaye is glad he ended up in L.A. “The relationships I made here have helped me so much.” He says he signed with his label, Republic Records, specifically because of its success in pop radio. “I could have gone with another label that was really good at branding, but I’d already built a strong brand myself,” he says. “I wanted someone who could do what I couldn’t.”

“One thing about Abel that people don’t realize is, he’s incredibly ambitious,” says Republic label head Monte Lipman. Tesfaye asked the record company to help assemble some hits. In the summer of 2014, Republic sent him a half-finished song by labelmate Ariana Grande, “Love Me Harder,” produced by the Swedish pop wizard Max Martin.

“It was a great song,” Tesfaye says, “but it was a little generic. I couldn’t hear myself on it. So I changed it and made it dark.” He rewrote the lyrics and sent them back, and Martin liked what he heard. “It was kind of like the label giving me an alley-oop,” Tesfaye says. “I think that’s where the stars aligned for me. When I see an opening” – he punches his fist in his palm – “I penetrate it.”

The song was released that September. “If people didn’t like it, I would’ve been like, ‘Let’s sweep it under the rug.’ But people were fucking with it.” The song went to Number Seven and marked a turning point for Tesfaye – the [Cont. on 66]



EARNED IT At Coachella, in Indio, California, earlier this year. “I can make a girl [dance] with a beat,” he says. “It’s very easy. But pop music, that shit’s hard.”

he says. “It’s just me documenting what’s around me. Whether it is something that happened to me or something I see. Nobody’s forcing anybody to do anything. I really do believe a woman does whatever she wants to do.”

Tesfaye doesn’t seem to have spent much time thinking about the implications of these lyrics since he wrote them, and seems taken aback by the suggestion of anything predatory: “I definitely should’ve seen this coming,” he says. “At some point, I’ll probably have to answer for this. But it’s consent, all of it.”

IN 2013, TEFAYE RELEASED “KISS Land,” the much-anticipated follow-up to his mixtape trilogy. He was hoping it

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARRIOR

How did Joe Rogan go from over-the-top UFC color man to a 21st-century Timothy Leary?

BY ERIK HEDEGAARD



AYBE NEVER IN YOUR LIFE do you meet an individual like Joe Rogan. He's that singular, in a multivariate kind of way. For instance, most folks think of him only as the flapping-jawed, bug-eyed, hyperexcitable blow-by-blow com-

mentator for all the Ultimate Fighting Championships' fights since 2002, given to innumerable "*words!*" and "*unbelieeeeeeables!*," all the while displaying a depth of mixed-martial-arts knowledge second to none and a totally side-splitting yet insightful way with words, as in the time he called a fighter's cut as deep as "a goat's vagina." In this regard, he's entirely sensational. "He's educated more people in mixed martial arts than anybody ever," says UFC president Dana White. "He's the best fight announcer who has ever called a fight in the history of fighting." And you've got to love him for that, unless, of course, you hate him, which many do, but let's not get into that now, because he's a lot more than just a UFC frontman.





Today, Rogan's finishing a workout at his cool, sprawling pad in a gated community north of L.A., 22 egg-laying chickens clucking around somewhere out back. His face is shiny with sweat, his bald head, too. He's been pounding away for the better part of an hour inside his garage gym, mainly working on his switch kick, which is exceedingly powerful, knocking his trainer back a foot with every thump, a reminder that, even though he's 48, he was once a teenage martial-arts champion and black belt. He wipes his face with a towel. He's a thick guy, not on the tall side, with a few pale splotches of stress-related vitiligo on his hands and feet. From one angle, he looks like a typical lunkhead chowder-brain knuckle-dragger, which might make sense, given that he comes from a home busted up by violence in Newark, New Jersey. But for a ball cap often worn backward, however, that's not him. In an hour, he will go host his podcast, *The Joe Rogan Experience*, which is downloaded 16 million times a month, making it one of the most popular in the nation, and discuss things like addiction, impulse-control issues and serotonin deficiencies, not smoking any weed beforehand, as he usually does, because today's topic is more serious. Then he'll head on over to a local cryotherapy center, get himself frozen for a few minutes at minus-270 degrees (or roughly the temperature of the dark side of the moon), and afterward say, "Oh, that was perfect!" In the evening, he'll wind up onstage in front of sold-out crowds at the Comedy Store and the Improv, because he's also a hardworking comedian with seven recordings to his credit.

And sometime soon, he'll find himself at a friend's house, half sprawled in the easiest of chairs, eyes shut, having just removed a smoking pipe from his mouth, breathing with purpose, while brilliant colors, shapes and swirls fall over him, rendering him helpless, until a few minutes later he is returned to Earth a happier man, a "more compassionate, more aware, more vulnerable" man, a better husband to his wife and father to his three kids, and so forth. Of all the psychedelics he's a fan of, his favorite is DMT, which Hunter S. Thompson once said was "like being shot out of a cannon." Rogan loves it, thinks everyone could benefit from it, often uses his podcast to fulminate positively on its various perception-enhancing benefits. He has been compared to Timothy Leary because of this, which he wouldn't know anything about, since he hates labels.

Right now, he's stepping around the cars in his garage – a sleek white SharkWerks-tuned Porsche 911 GT3 RS rests on the floor beneath a deep-silver '65 Corvette on

a lift – to open a freezer and show what's inside. Dozens of small packages wrapped in brown paper and bagged in plastic.

He points at one of them.

"This is a moose heart," he says, happily. "I like moose. I like moose steaks, moose stew, and moose burgers are delicious." He closes that freezer, opens another. "This is from a wild pig. This is a sausage from something. This is more moose. This is deer. This is bear. And all this I killed myself." Stepping back, he says, "Yes, I get some grief for it. But you know what's unexpected to me? How little rational thought comes from vegans who own pets and feed them murdered animals. I'm like, 'Whoa, what the fuck is going on here?'"

So, he's got lots of things going on besides being the voice of the UFC. Stack one thing up against another, however, and not much of it makes sense, which makes him some kind of stitched-together perplexity, maybe even a novelty.

"Yeah, man," he says later on, going inside his house and down a set of stairs. "Like, you're not supposed to be a psychedelic proponent and a cage-fighting commentator at the same time. Those two things joined are just too fucking weird, you know? I mean, I don't get it. And I'm me. I just —" He stops talking, cuts that one thought short, finds another. "You know what you figure out in the middle of a trip? That all these assumptions and preconceived notions of who you are, they're all bullshit. You're just an organism who is trying to find normalcy by repeating patterns." Unless, of course, you're him, in which case patterns are made to be broken. He doesn't say this about himself, though. But it is understood. A pattern-driven mind doesn't often stumble onto a goat's vagina. But his does.

In his basement, he flicks on a light. In front of him is a huge box, made out of stainless steel, big enough for him to fit inside, should he feel the need or desire.

IN TRUTH, HIS PODCAST IS ONE OF the greatest things going. It's like a journey around the known universe, as well as the unknown, the suspected and the highly suspect. So far, there've been 705 episodes. He started it five years ago, with friend and fellow comic Brian Redban, 41, just the two of them smoking weed and chewing the fat, nothing

much going on, no grand ambitions. Early guests were largely confined to friends from MMA and comedy. But then Rogan started to haul in the more far-flung: marijuana activists, former porn stars, believers in the sanctity of shrooms, four-hour-work-week proselytizers, rappers, former LAPD cops, outdoorsmen, futurists, neuroscientists, Egyptologists, Tommy Chong, triathlete vegans, whistle-blowers, mind coaches, insomniacs, experts on toxoplasmosis, comics with nicknames like the Machine, Neil deGrasse Tyson, former CIA operatives, a woman who lives in Kavik (197 miles north of the Arctic Circle), former UFC great Georges St-Pierre half admitting to alien abduction, and conspiracy theorists of all kinds (Bigfoot, UFOs, chemtrails, JFK, 9/11, the Apollo moon landing).

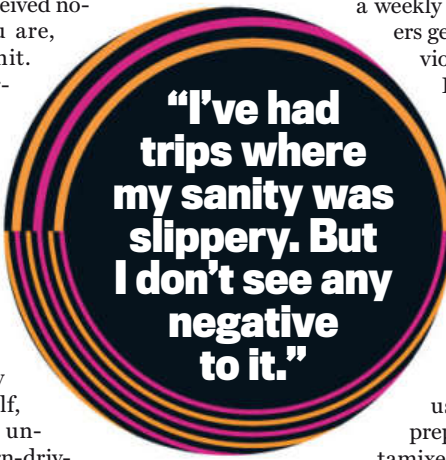
Not a lot of rhyme or reason there, but that's just how Rogan likes it, and he does have his logic. "Everything we do or try to do, we try to do a better version of it all the time. We're constantly looking to improve. It's a big part of being a human being. And I think the podcast improves people, not only the people who listen to it, but me as well."

Along the way, he will allow that he's only a conduit for those smarter than himself and call himself a "silly bitch." Regardless, he's huge into self-improvement, especially of the self-dabbling kind. He shoots himself up with testosterone on a weekly basis – "It's what fighters get in trouble for, but, obviously, I'm not competing."

I just like the idea that I'm cheating old age and death, although, you know, you can't cheat it forever" – as well as human growth hormone. If he's dragging a little, he'll pop a Nuvigil, a variant of the focus-improving drug that fighter pilots use. Most mornings, he preps for the day with a Vitamixed, sludgy blend of kale, spinach, celery, "a large hunk of ginger about the size of a child's thumb," four cloves of garlic, an apple and some coconut oil. Tastes like crud. "But after your body digests it," he says, "you're like, 'Whoa, we've got a lot of stuff to work with here.'"

And where does his beloved dimethyltryptamine (a.k.a. DMT) come into play in all this?

"Well, that's a good question," he says. "That's like saying, 'Where does life come into play in all this?' The experience is so overwhelming and so alien. It's just hard for anyone to describe. You're just boom! Shot to the middle of everything for 15 minutes. Constantly changing geomet-



"I've had trips where my sanity was slippery. But I don't see any negative to it."

Contributing editor ERIK HEDEGAARD profiled Terrence Howard in September.



BIG GAME

(1) Rogan loves to hunt. "Moose burgers are delicious," he says. (2) With Ronda Rousey. Rogan is the voice of the UFC, as well as a comedian, actor and host of a popular podcast. (3) He was a teen taekwondo star.



ric patterns. Jokers with jesters' hats on, all giving me the finger. I've had psychedelic trips where my own sanity was slippery. It's so titanic that any words I use to describe it are just noise. It's a fucking billion roller coasters, plus aliens. It is whatever it is. I don't know what it is. A chemical gateway to another dimension? A portal of souls you can tap into? I don't see any negative to it. And it's so fucked up that we don't have the freedom to experiment with it legally, because there are lessons to be learned that are just not getting learned."

What those lessons are, exactly, he's hard-pressed to say. It's like when he says, "It's a very odd experience to take an animal's life. The first time I did it, it was psychedelic. It was a transformative experience." Which sounds good but doesn't mean much. Or like when he's down in his basement, as he is now, standing in front of that big stainless-steel box. It's his flotation tank, first developed by dolphin researcher John Lilly in the 1950s, later made infamous in the movie *Altered States*.

Rogan opens the doors and peers inside. Normally, he floats a few times a week, the saltwater inside keeping him at neutral buoyancy, the temperature matching his skin's, in total blackness, allowing his mind to wander and, upon its return, for him to say things like, "It can be brutal and unflinching in its portrayal of you and your reality," and "It can be uncomfortable in the sense that you really can't run away from any of the things that are subconsciously troubling you." And even now he says, "I've definitely had some dark moments in there."

Like what?

He shrugs and starts back up the stairs, says, "Well, nothing interesting that's negative," and pretty soon, he's in his Porsche, gunning himself somewhere, and with each passing second adding more G's to the day's unfolding situation.

BORN IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, father a cop, mom a free spirit. He was five when his folks divorced, and seven when he moved with his mom to San Francisco, where she remarried a hippie sort "with hair down to his ass." First tasted weed at the age of eight, with his stepdad, and then not again, unless drunk, until the age of 30. He remembers that a gay couple lived next door and "my mom would go over and get naked with them and play the bongos and smoke pot."

The family eventually settled into Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts, just west of Boston, where Rogan took up karate at age 14; became a four-time full-contact taekwondo state champion; won the U.S. Open Taekwondo Championships by age 19; and stopped at age 21, suffering from headaches and fear of worse. He attended UMass for a few years but found it pointless and dropped out. In Boston, he delivered newspapers, drove a DUI-saddled private investigator around on stakeouts, taught martial arts. He decided to become a stand-up comic, in 1988, after friends goaded him into taking the stage one night and he liked it. Played bars, bachelor parties, anything. Moved to L.A. in 1994, to make it in the big time. Acted in a failed sitcom before getting his big break on *NewsRadio*, 1995 to 1999, playing a goofy electrician. Loved that job. Served fly-and-maggot cocktails as the host of the gross-out reality show *Fear Factor* from 2001 until 2006. The first time Dana White called him about doing the UFC's color commentary, Rogan tried to beg off. This was in 2002. "I just want to go to the fights and drink," he told White. But White persevered and eventually got Rogan for free, in exchange for prime fight tickets for him and his friends. Fifteen or so gratis gigs later, Rogan went on the UFC payroll and has been there ever since. "The thing about Rogan is, when you watch him call a fight, you know he knows what he's talking about and loves what he's talking about," says White. "The man is passionate."

In 2007, at the Comedy Store, he got into a beef with comic Carlos Mencia and called him out as a joke thief – "Men-stealia," the lowest of the low – which led to a sprawling argument that was caught on video and went viral. (Mencia has denied consciously stealing jokes.) Comics everywhere rose up to support Rogan, and to this day, he is beloved for his actions.

Over the years, he has appeared in documentaries like *Marijuana: A Chronic History* (2010) and *DMT: The Spirit Molecule* (2010), and shown up in two Kevin James movies, *Zookeeper* (2011) and *Here Comes the Boom* (2012). He's long said he'd never get married – even today he says, "Mariage is dumb, fucking dumb" – but in 2009 he got hitched to a [Cont. on 68]

The Dark Net

Inside the Web's secret space for drug dealers, arms traffickers, hackers and political dissidents – all funded by the U.S. government

By David Kushner

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McCABE

ON JULY 15TH IN PITTSBURGH, David J. Hickton, a gray-haired U.S. attorney in a crisp dark suit, stepped out before an American flag to announce the feds' latest victory against online crime. "We have dismantled a cyber-hornet's nest of criminal hackers, which was believed by many to be impenetrable," he said. "We are in the process of rounding up and charging the hornets." By the next morning, more than 70 people across the world had been charged, arrested or searched in what the Department of Justice called "the largest coordinated international law-enforcement effort ever directed at an online cybercriminal forum."

After an 18-month international investigation led by the FBI, known as Operation Shrouded Horizon, hackers on a site called Darkode were accused of wire fraud, money laundering and conspiring to commit computer fraud. The trail of crimes was massive, with one member compromising companies including Microsoft and Sony and another swiping data from more than 20 million victims. Hickton said Darkode posed "one of the gravest threats to the integrity of data on computers in the United States and around the world." Its computers were considered "bulletproof" from the law by running on offshore servers – including one traced to Seychelles, the remote island nation in the Indian Ocean. "Cybercriminals should not have a safe haven to shop for the tools



of their trade,” said FBI Deputy Director Mark F. Giuliano, “and Operation Shrouded Horizon shows we will do all we can to disrupt their unlawful activities.”

At least for a bit. Two weeks later, “Sp3cial1st,” the main administrator of Darkode, posted a retaliatory statement on a new website – underscoring the feds’ struggle to police the Internet. “Most of the staff is intact, along with senior members,” Sp3cial1st wrote. “It appears the raids focused on newly added individuals or people that have been retired from the scene for years. The forum will be back.” He vowed the organization would regroup on the Web’s deepest, most impenetrable region, the Darknet – a space where anyone, including criminals, can remain virtually anonymous. And the Darknet could never be shut down – thanks, conveniently, to the feds, who created it and are still financing its growth.

The Darknet (sometimes called the Dark Web) works on the Tor browser, free software that masks your location and activity. Originally designed by the Naval Research Lab, Tor receives 60 percent of its backing from the State Department and the Department of Defense to act as a secure network for government agencies as well as dissidents fighting oppressive regimes. It is a privacy tool that has been used for both good and evil. Over the past decade, Tor has empowered activists to spread news during the Arab Spring; it has helped domestic-violence victims hide from online stalkers; and it has allowed ordinary citizens to surf without advertisers tracking them. But at the same time, the Darknet, which Tor enables, has become the primary cove for criminals like Ross Ulbricht, imprisoned founder of Silk Road; the hackers behind the recent Ashley Madison attacks; and the international crew busted by the feds in July. As an instrument for both activists and criminals, Tor presents an increasingly difficult problem for law enforcement to solve – exacerbating the hapless game of whack-a-mole facing those who try to bring law to the most lawless part of the Net. And the battle over the Darknet’s future could decide the fate of online privacy in the U.S. and abroad. As Hickton tells *ROLLING STONE*, “It’s the Wild West of the Internet.”

THINK OF THE WEB AS AN iceberg. Most people only see the so-called Surface Web above the water: all the news and gossip and porn

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that’s just a Google search away. But dive below and you’ll see the vast expanse of the Deep Web: all the data that search engines can’t find, which is much larger than the Surface Web. This includes anything behind a paywall (like Netflix), a password-protected site (like your e-mail) or a Web page that requires you to do your searching there (like when you’re trying to find court records).

The Darknet lurks in the Deep Web, because the sites there can’t be found by search engines either. But here’s the big difference: The Darknet is composed of people and sites that want to remain anonymous and, unless you’re using the Tor browser, are nearly impossible to find. Tor lets you peruse the Surface Web, just as you do with Firefox or Safari, but it also allows you to surf Amazon *and* Silk Road. Using a regular browser like Firefox, you can be identified by your Internet Protocol (IP) address, the numerical code that can be traced to your unique device. But on the Darknet, your location – and the locations of the people overseeing the sites you search – remain hidden. Most people use Tor for law-abiding privacy purposes. In fact, according to the Tor Project – the government-funded nonprofit that maintains the browser – Darknet surfing accounts for only three percent of Tor usage. (And criminal activities are just a fraction of that.) But because the Darknet is so seemingly shadowy and mysterious, it has become ominous in the popular imagination, a creepy catchall that includes everything scary lurking online: terrorists, pedophiles, dope dealers, hackers-for-hire.

In the past year, some of those scarier elements have been surfacing. In May, the feds sentenced Ulbricht, founder of Silk Road – the online black market that generated roughly \$200 million in sales – to

life in prison. In August, hackers dumped the personal information of 36 million users of Ashley Madison, the cheaters’ website, on the Darknet. After ISIS claimed responsibility for a shooting outside a Prophet Mohammed cartoon contest in Texas in May, the Darknet was singled out for blame. Michael B. Steinbach, assistant director of the FBI’s counterterrorism division, told the House Homeland Security Committee that encryption tools have given such terrorists “a free zone by which to recruit, radicalize, plot and plan.” Without the ability to adequately monitor the terrorists online, Steinbach went on, “we’re past going dark in certain instances. We *are* dark.”

Despite the high-profile busts of Darkode and Silk Road, the Darknet is thriving. According to an August study by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, criminals earn an estimated \$100 million a year by selling drugs and other contraband on hidden websites using the virtual currency bitcoin, the digital cash that doesn’t require a credit card or bank to process the transactions. The feds aren’t just battling bad guys adept at hiding online, they’re also facing a massive rush of ordinary people looking to score anonymously. “Given the high demand for the products being sold,” the CMU researchers conclude, “it is not clear that take-downs will be effective.”

Though a lot of people think you have to be some kind of hacker to navigate the Darknet, it’s surprisingly easy to sell or buy illegal goods and services. Click on Tor, and it looks like any other browser – complete with its own cartoonish onion logo – though it moves more slowly because of complex routing behind the scenes. Instead of ending in a .com or .org Web address, Darknet sites end in .onion and are often called onion sites. Since Google doesn’t crawl onion sites, you need to use rudimentary Darknet search engines and listings such as the Hidden Wiki or Onion Link.

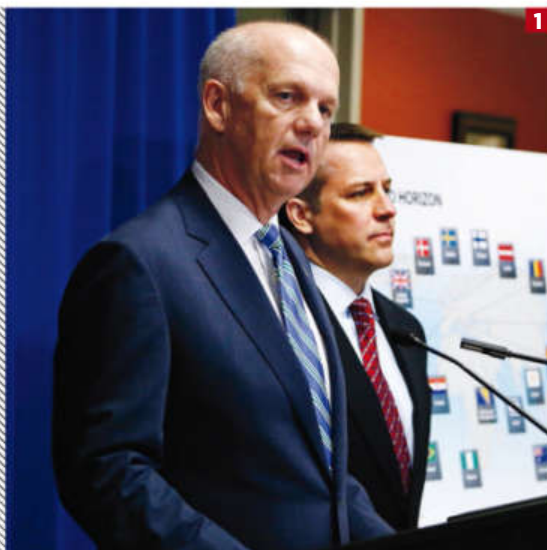
Black-market Darknet sites look a lot like any other retailer, except there are categories for, say, benzos, psychedelics and used AK-47s instead of woks and lawn ornaments. On Silk Road 3, a site unaffiliated with the original one, you can search by category, or scroll down to see pictures and descriptions of bestsellers: 1 g 90 percent-purity coke, x10 methylphenidate XL 18 mg (Concerta/Ritalin), and so on. Vendors are verified and rated by the community, just as on eBay and other shopping sites.

But while navigating the Darknet seems easy enough, law enforcement has a much more difficult time busting the bad guys for one simple reason: The same tools that keep government agents and

Darknet retail sites function like Amazon, but you can purchase psychedelics and AK-47s instead of woks or lawn ornaments.

Feds and Geeks Unite

(1) U.S. Attorney David Hickton announces charges stemming from the Darkode site in July. **(2)** Drugs confiscated from a Darknet vendor in Germany in March. **(3)** Tor founders Syverson (bottom center), Dingledine and Mathewson (top, from left) continue to develop the browser.



dissidents anonymous keep criminals virtually invisible too. “This is the crime scene of the 21st century, and these traffickers are finding all kinds of ways to cover their tracks,” says Karen Friedman Agnifilo, Manhattan’s chief assistant district attorney, who’s among those leading the fight against criminals online. “Law enforcement has to play catch-up.”

PAUL SYVERSON, A 57-YEAR-old mathematician at the U.S. Naval Research Lab, created Tor as a means for people to communicate securely online. “We certainly were aware that bad people could use it,” says Syverson, wearing an M.C. Escher T-shirt in his cluttered office in Washington, D.C., “but our goal was to have some-

thing for the honest people who need to protect themselves.”

Since its inception in 1923, the NRL has been the military’s most esteemed research and development lab, inventing everything from radar to GPS. In 1995, Syverson and his colleagues conceived a way to make online communications as secure as possible. The idea was to provide a means for anyone – including government employees and agents – to share intelligence without revealing their identities or locations. With funding from the Department of Defense, Syverson brought on two scruffy graduates from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Roger Dingledine and Nick Mathewson, to help bring his vision to life. Like Syverson, Dingledine – a ponytailed privacy activist from Chapel Hill, North Carolina – saw the project as a way to empower everyone in the age of online surveillance. “How can we build a system that gives you privacy in the face of the large governments who are surveilling the Internet as much as they can?” Dingledine asks. “That’s a really hard research problem.”

To understand how the problem was solved, imagine a spy taking a train from Paris to Berlin. If the spy travels directly,

he can easily be followed. But if he takes a series of trains between several cities – Paris to Amsterdam, Amsterdam to Madrid, Madrid to Berlin – he’s harder to trace. This was essentially how Syverson and his team designed the solution. Instead of a spy in Paris directly accessing a computer in Berlin, he would be routed through a random series of computers along the way, hiding where he was based. They called the network the Onion Routing, evoking this layered means of online access.

If only military people used Tor, though, it’d be obvious that the traffic was government-related. “We wanted to have a network that would carry traffic for a variety of users,” Syverson says, “so you don’t necessarily know if this is a cancer survivor looking up information or somebody from the Navy.” In order to do that, Syverson and his team made a decision he calls “central to the security of the system”: They designed Tor to be freely available online and open-sourced, which meant it could be assessed and improved by anyone around the world.

The Tor network wasn’t just designed to hide who is accessing websites, it was created to give websites the ability to mask the locations of the servers hosting them. One of the ideas was to provide a kind of secret bunker for government

websites, so that if they were under attack, agents could visit a hidden version of the site online without hackers tracing them. These were the sites that ended with .onion. The Tor creators call them “hidden services” sites – today, it’s more sensationally known as the Darknet.

In 2003, Tor software was publicly released. Word about the browser spread on forums among privacy advocates and researchers, and it soon became the most resilient and important tool for anyone seeking to preserve their anonymity online. Geeks, agents and activists formed a volunteer network of nodes that routed Tor traffic anonymously across the world. Before long, people could reliably surf the Internet without being traced – out of sight of anyone who wanted to know who they were, where they were traveling or what they intended.

TOR’S EARLY ADOPTERS weren’t criminals – they were dissidents. One of them is Nima Fatemi, a black-clad 27-year-old Iranian who serves as a key Tor evangelist – helping others around the world use the software to fight oppressive regimes. “We needed

something different to connect to the Internet safely," he tells me. "I found Tor and thought, 'This is the tool.' It was peace of mind."

In the summer of 2009 in Tehran, Fatemi was running for his life from riot police after shooting photos of a protest. "I felt it a duty because so many people outside of Iran had no idea that we were protesting," he says. "The state TV was just showing photos of flowers and stuff." As soldiers chased him, Fatemi tore through the streets, leaping over a fallen woman, and turned into a courtyard where a sympathetic family gave him cover. "The police would attack me as if I had an RPG on my shoulder," Fatemi says.

It's dangerous to be a social-media activist in certain parts of the world. Recently, a blogger in Brazil was beheaded, and another in Bangladesh was killed with machetes. In Iran, blogger Soheil Arabi was sentenced by the Supreme Court to be hanged for "insulting the Prophet Mohammed" in Facebook posts. (His sentence was later commuted to two years of mandatory theology study, but he is serving a seven-and-a-half-year jail sentence for insulting the Supreme Leader.) This year, four secular bloggers were murdered in Bangladesh alone.

At the time of his near capture, Fatemi had been uploading photos that were used on Facebook and Twitter to spread breaking news of the Iranian government's crackdown on dissidents. Under increased scrutiny, he'd turned to Tor to continue working anonymously – and to help himself and his fellow activists stay out of jail. Fatemi held private workshops in Iran, teaching friends and family how to use the software and thus strengthening the network, as more users meant more nodes with which to relay and hide the online traffic. "We spread the tool everywhere," he says.

In the decade since the Tor software has been released, it has spread virally beyond the U.S. government and into the activist community. This is fueled in part by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the digital-rights group which used to fund and still champions Tor as a powerful pro-democracy tool. Jacob Appelbaum, the noted activist who has worked closely with Edward Snowden and Julian Assange, calls it "surveillance resistance." By using Tor in place of another browser, protesters and journalists can log on to Twitter or surf dissident chat rooms with far less risk of being tracked by a government that might imprison them or worse. "There are countries where browsing a



The Fall of Silk Road

Ross Ulbricht, the 31-year-old founder of Silk Road, was sentenced to life in prison in 2013. Before being taken down by the FBI, his site sold items ranging from drugs to fake IDs on the Darknet.

political website about democracy can get you thrown in jail," says Jeremy Gillula, a staff technologist at the EFF. "That's the most life-and-death reason why Tor needs to exist."

During the Arab Spring, Tor helped facilitate protests throughout the Middle East. Nasser Weddady, a 39-year-old Mauritanian-American activist, was living in the States and began promoting the underground browser – becoming one of the most influential social-media dissidents during the uprising. "There would be no access to Twitter or Facebook in some of these places if you didn't have Tor," he says. "All of the sudden, you had all these dissidents exploding under their noses, and then down the road you had a revolution."

With the Tor Project still largely being financed by the DOD, Mathewson and Dingledine have kept the software and community evolving. For Mathewson, a bushy-bearded 38-year-old sci-fi fan, its continuing spread among activists throughout the world exceeded his dreams. "I'd be getting e-mails from people saying, 'I'm pretty sure your software saved my life,'" he recalls. "I'd say, 'I'm very glad you're alive, but I'm just this person who's been writing software – I hope I don't screw anything up!'"

ON JANUARY 27TH, 2011, Ross Ulbricht, operating under the pseudonym Al-toid, announced the launch of the first black-market site to exploit the cloaking powers of the Darknet. "I came across this website called Silk Road," he posted on a drug forum called Shroomery.org, posing as a customer. "It's a Tor hidden service that

claims to allow you to buy and sell anything online anonymously.”

Ulbricht, who ran the site as Dread Pirate Roberts, was the first to fully exploit Tor’s potential for fostering a new kind of criminal enterprise. It was more of a novel idea than a technical feat. Ulbricht, or anyone running an illegal Web page, could simply create it on the Tor hidden network. This made it difficult not only to find who was hosting the address, but also who was visiting it. But Ulbricht went further by using bitcoin to make the subsequent transactions just as hard to track.

By the summer of 2011, word of the Darknet hit the press and the cops. In a July news conference about Silk Road, Sen. Chuck Schumer, of New York, demonized drug sellers and buyers who were “hiding their identities through a program that makes them virtually untraceable,” and called on the Drug Enforcement Agency to crack down. *Time* magazine called the Darknet “a haven for criminals...where drugs, porn and murder live online.” The *Daily Mail* warned that “hiring a hitman has never been easier.”

Many activists in the Tor community, however, wince when they hear the word “Darknet.” Criminal sites, they say, represent a tiny fraction of .onion traffic. For them, the focus on criminality obscures Tor’s greater intent. “I don’t think very much of the term ‘Darknet,’” Mathewson says with a groan. “I think it’s pretty much a media creation.”

Whatever it’s called, powerful agencies are still taking the Darknet seriously. According to an Edward Snowden leak in October 2013, the NSA, during a top-secret presentation in 2012, considered Tor a threat. “Tor stinks,” reads the title of one NSA slide. “We will never be able to de-anonymize all Tor users [but] we can de-anonymize a very small fraction.” (When contacted by *ROLLING STONE*, the NSA declined to comment.) In another of Snowden’s revelations, Britain’s intelligence agency, the Government Communications Headquarters, dismissed the democratic potential of Tor as “pseudo-legitimate uses” that paled next to the “bad people” who ruled the Darknet.

As a result, law-enforcement agencies began seeking new ways to infiltrate the Darknet. In July, Interpol held its first-ever training on “identifying the methods and strategies used by organized crime networks and individuals to avoid detection on the Darknet.” That same month, FBI Director James Comey explained to a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee the agency’s plight in tracking encrypted communications. “The tools we are asked to use are increasingly ineffective,” he said.

But according to e-mails recently leaked online, there was at least one com-

DARKNET’S BLACK- MARKET BOOM

Launched in 2003,
the online criminal cove
now has sales up to
\$180 million a year

28

Approximate number of illegal
Darknet black markets online

70

Percentage of Darknet
sales that consist of pot,
Ecstasy or coke

9,386

Estimated number of unique
vendors on the Darknet

35

Number of vendors
selling more than \$1 million
of illegal product

**\$150-\$180
million**

Total annual sales on all Darknet
markets combined

\$475,000

Average sales per week on Silk
Road during March 2012

\$300,000

Average sales per day on Silk
Road during summer 2013

**\$7,000-
\$30,000**

Average price of a gun
on the Darknet’s largest illegal
market for weapons

pany pawning a solution: Hacking Team, a software-security firm based in Milan, which equips governments to fight back against criminals, activists and dissenters on the Darknet. As Hacking Team CEO David Vincenzetti wrote to his private mailing list after Comey’s remarks, “The Darknet can be totally neutralized/decrypted. The right technology to accomplish this exists...Just rely on us.”

The e-mails came as part of a breach in July by an unknown attacker against Hacking Team’s internal database. They revealed that the FBI has spent almost \$775,000 on Hacking Team software and services, including tools that, as Vincenzetti suggested, specifically targeted criminals on the Darknet. In one e-mail from September, an FBI employee wanted to know if the latest version of Hacking Team’s spyware could still “reveal the true IP address of target using Tor...If not, can you please provide us a way to defeat Tor...? Thank you!” (When contacted, the FBI said it does not comment on specific tools and techniques.)

Of course, this can all seem nutty, wasteful and insidious that one end of the U.S. government is trying to crack the secret code funded by another. When I ask Syverson how he feels about the government trying to compromise Tor, he declines to comment, saying that this is out of the scope of his work. Mathewson, however, shrugs off the seemingly bizarre scenario. “It’s not like people are being followed around by shadowy agents,” he quips. “I guess we kind of always assumed the NSA tries to break all interesting new encryption.”

Eric Rabe, spokesman for Hacking Team, will not confirm or deny the FBI’s use of the company’s tool. But he was quick to promote its software, which, he tells me, allows a client to see whatever a target is doing on a computer or mobile device, including surfing the Darknet. In the wrong hands, such a tool could be used to infiltrate or infect a victim’s machine. And the market for this product is only growing, as agencies try to break Tor, which Rabe calls “the front door to the Dark Web.” He goes on, “Clearly, Tor is used very broadly for criminal activity. I don’t think even the most staunch human rights activists would say that’s not true.”

But most activists view the government’s battle against the Darknet as the new Reefer Madness, a misguided attack on something becoming increasingly endangered: privacy and anonymity online. “There are a lot of governments around the world that are trying to prevent people from reaching these sites,” Dingleline tells me one afternoon at a cafe in Philadelphia. When I ask him which other government agencies are trying to break Tor,

he gives a shrug. "The simple answer is 'I don't know,'" he says. "And that's really disturbing."

DAN KAUFMAN, THE CHIPPER white-haired innovation head at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency – the DOD's research and development wing – is a former video-game designer who quit his job to fight real-life criminals. In a darkened conference room in the agency's nondescript Arlington, Virginia, headquarters in June, he turns on a large high-definition monitor to show me how DARPA is trying to win the Web's ultimate game: cops and robbers in the digital age.

By way of example, he pulls up an ad for a prostitute named Cherry. In her photo, she's thin, Asian, and looks 19 but could be in her thirties. Her description reads that she's five feet four, has shoulder-length brown hair and no tattoos or piercings. Cherry is a sex-trafficking victim, just one of an estimated 600,000 to 800,000, according to the U.S. State Department, who are moved across international borders each year. This is the fastest-growing crime industry in the world, pulling in annual profits of nearly \$100 billion.

And just like other criminal enterprises – like drugs and weapons – it has migrated from the streets to the hidden corners of the Internet: anonymous forums, encrypted chats, subscription services and other sites that search engines are unable to locate. This problem gave DARPA the idea to take action. "It started that simply: 'This is terrible, we should do something about it,'" Kaufman recalls.

What they did was create Memex: a search engine that works on the Deep Web and Darknet. Memex can crawl the hidden Web, finding sites and storing data so it can later be scoured, just as one would search the Surface Web with Google. It's the latest and most important weapon for online investigators and represents a new phase in the conflict that may expose the hidden Internet like never before. As Kaufman shows me, with just Cherry's e-mail address and a click, Memex displays a glowing matrix of associated leads: phone numbers, massage-parlor addresses, photos associated with her online ads.

Memex is the brainchild of Dr. Christopher White, a former DARPA program manager. Just 33, White earned his accolades as DARPA's senior official in Afghanistan and, in the past couple of years, set his attention on the Darknet. The inspi-

ration, he tells me, came from his tours of law-enforcement agencies, which seemed woefully unprepared for rooting out criminals online. "They were using Google and Bing as part of their jobs," he says. "The things they were looking for weren't online through those mechanisms – they were in the deeper Darknet."

Government agencies and law enforcement now work closely with DARPA to customize Memex for their needs, and are also exploring its use for finding ISIS recruiters hiding online. The technology is part of a booming industry based on taming the Darknet. So called "threat intelligence" firms – such as iSight Partners, which *The New York Times* compared to "military scouts" – charge clients like banks and government agencies as much as \$500,000 to comb the Darknet for potential hackers. According to Gartner, a technology research firm, the market could reach \$1 billion by 2017.

But could exposing the Darknet ultimately kill the last place remaining for Internet privacy? Online freedom fighters hope Memex won't have the same effect on those using the Darknet for legal means. "Memex might be a fascinating and powerful tool, but, like any other tool, it can be used for good or ill," a cybersecurity blog-

HOW TOR EMPOWERS INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

The secretive browser is not just used by criminals – it allows activists to fight oppressive governments anonymously



Kenya

In January, journalists and human rights leaders launched AfriLeaks, a whistle-blower site to expose corruption in Africa – home to three of the top 10 worst-ranked countries for free press, according to the Press Freedom Index. The service relies on Tor to ensure the anonymity of its sources in Kenya and across the continent.



China

The Great Firewall, the Chinese government's efforts to block or censor the Internet, has been used to stop political dissidents from using Tor. But China faces a dilemma – it can't shut off the Internet completely. "China has to walk a fine line because they can't get their corporations off the Internet," Dingle-dine says.



Russia

Freedom fighters in Russia use Tor to access banned sites, but the "Safe Internet League," backed by the country's three largest mobile providers, supported a ban on Tor in February. "Do not forget that Tor is an American development and it's used by American intelligence agencies," the SIL said.



Egypt

During the Arab Spring, activists in Tahir Square used Tor to access the Internet and communicate with other protesters throughout the Middle East after regimes restricted Web access. "There would be no access to Twitter or Facebook in some of those places if you didn't have Tor," activist Nasser Weddady says.



Iran

Activists like Nima Fattemi have relied on Tor in Iran to provide information and aid. "The government only sees that you're connecting to Tor," he says. "They don't see what you're doing there." In March, Tor was attacked by the government, which succeeded in cutting the browser's users by 20 percent.



Aiding the Arab Spring

A protester raising the Egyptian flag in Cairo in March 2013. Nima Fatemi (right) used the Tor browser to spread news of revolt in Iran and is now its top proponent.



ger recently posted online. “That same technology can very well be put to use to invade privacy and trace the flow of legitimate and private data.”

“Privacy is a huge issue,” says Kaufman, who recently left DARPA to become deputy director of Google’s Advanced Technology and Projects group. Memex has built-in limitations. It can only comb content on the Deep Web and Darknet that is publicly available – those sites that aren’t password protected or behind a paywall. This limits Memex’s ability to bust a site like Darkode, which required passwords for users. Memex won’t kill the Darknet – but it will make it a lot more exposed to law enforcement. “I think the world is better with transparency,” Kaufman tells me.

IN LATE AUGUST, ADMINISTRATORS for the online black market Agora, one of the biggest hubs for buying dope after the bust of Silk Road, took to the DarkNetMarkets forum on Reddit with a warning. “Recently research had come that shed some light on vulnerabilities in Tor Hidden Ser-

vices protocol which could help to de-anonymize server locations,” they wrote. In other words, something in Tor seemed seriously fucked.

They seemed to be referring to a new MIT study that claimed to have found crucial weaknesses in Tor that allowed researchers to break the anonymity of its users. “We have recently been discovering suspicious activity around our servers,” the Agora administrators continued, “which led us to believe that some of the attacks described in the research could be going on.” And, for safety’s sake, they were temporarily taking their site off the Darknet until they found a fix. As of this writing, Agora is still offline.

For the time being, the cops battling the Darknet have reason to celebrate. Despite the braggadocio of the Darkode forum alum, who promised they’d resurface on the Darknet, they have yet to be

seen (though this doesn’t mean they’re not there) – and the first guilty pleas of its users are coming. Eric “Phastman” Crocker, a 29-year-old from Binghamton, New York, recently pleaded guilty to violating anti-spam laws after he was busted for selling malware. He is scheduled to be sentenced on November 23rd, and faces up to three years in prison and \$250,000 in fines.

But as the feds count their victories, the people who depend on anonymity are still fighting for their lives. In August, Saudi Arabia’s Supreme Court decided to review the controversial case of Raif Badawi, a 31-year-old blogger sentenced to a decade in prison and 1,000 lashes, after being arrested in June 2012 for allegedly criticizing the kingdom’s clerics. Badawi, who has since won a PEN Pinter Prize, personifies the importance of preserving online anonymity and freedom – made possible by the same software that powers the Darknet. Speaking out in support of Tor, California Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren is among the small group of lawmakers who believe the feds shouldn’t lose sight of its original purpose. “Tor was developed with

support by the U.S. government to promote freedom,” she says. “That’s why we support the creation of Tor and remains the core reason why Tor exists.”

As the battle continues over the Darknet, Tor’s popularity only becomes more mainstream. Facebook now offers a .onion version of its site on Tor for those wanting to feel less watched. In June, speaking at an event for EPIC, a privacy and civil liberties nonprofit, Apple

CEO Tim Cook railed against government efforts to crack consumer devices. “Removing encryption tools from our products altogether, as some in Washington would like us to do, would only hurt law-abiding citizens who rely on us to protect their data,” he said. “The bad guys will still encrypt; it’s easy to do and readily available.”

Mathewson predicts that other Web browsers like Firefox will build Tor into their functionality, and he hopes that privacy will become “a default mode of communication on the Internet” within five years. But the circuitous chase will surely continue. For all the activists using these tools to better the world, there will be criminals employing the same tools to exploit it – and law enforcers hunting them down. “I’m as concerned about privacy rights as anybody,” says U.S. Attorney Hickton, “but would you have us do nothing?”

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Reviews

"My shrink is telling me I got crazy dreams/She's also saying I got low self-esteem/She's kinda hot, though."

—5 SECONDS OF SUMMER,
"She's Kinda Hot"

The Little Pop Band That Wanted to Rock

Two parts Green Day, one part One D, all teen-girl appeal: 5SOS go bigger than ever



5 Seconds of Summer

Sounds Good Feels Good

Capitol/Hi or Hey

★★★

BY JON DOLAN

The biggest new rock act in the world doesn't play indie or metal, and it doesn't have anything to do with Jack White or the Black Keys (at least not yet). Actually, it's a boy band. Australian quartet 5 Seconds of Summer blew up last year with "She Looks So Perfect," which features the indelible chorus "She looks so perfect standing there/In my American Apparel underwear." 5SOS got their start opening for One Direction, whom they rival in catchiness and cuteness, but their music is powered by a completely different strain of hormonal napalm. They play guitars, write a decent chunk of their music and work a pop-punk sound that evokes Blink-182 more than the Backstreet Boys.

The band formed in 2011 at a Christian high school near Sydney, where it got noticed posting YouTube covers and were



Reviews

soon scooped up and lofted into the Top 40. 5SOS' 2014 debut cranked out neon-lime Green Day tuneage with a light spritz of suburban emo ennui – as if every song was expressly designed to soundtrack a graduation party montage in an *American Pie* movie.

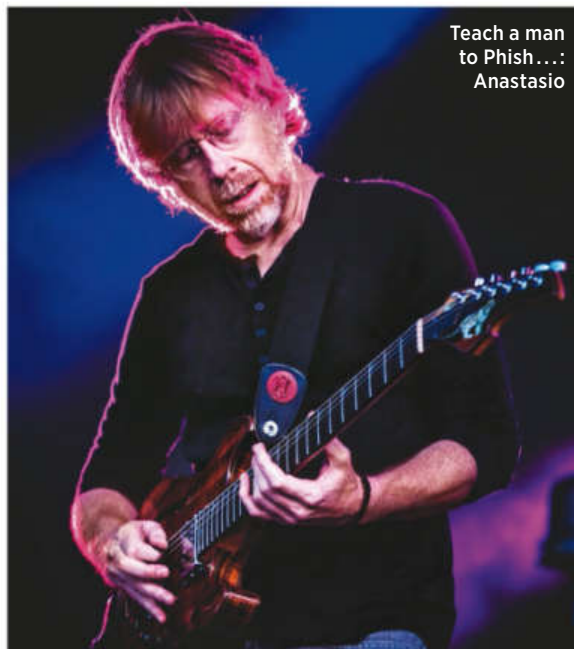
Their second LP shows off their musical knowledge and ambition without getting in the way of their own preternatural adorableness. “Hey Everybody!” comes litigiously close to the melody from Duran Duran’s “Hungry Like the Wolf”; “Permanent Vacation” features singer Michael Clifford’s best Billie Joe Armstrong impression as he fires off complaints about corporations “taking over the radio stations,” which feels especially ballsy coming from a band whose biggest song is basically an ad for a clothing brand. The boffo power-ballad moment is “Jet Black Heart,” where Clifford ties a scary emotional weather report (“I’ve got a jet-black heart, and there’s a hurricane underneath it”) to a melody so obvious, *Hodor* from *Game of Thrones* could jump in on the chorus.

These guys have more teenage girls in their audience than any punkish band ever, which means that they can’t make like far-too-many punkish bands before them and treat the opposite gender like a race of icky space aliens. There’s real generosity in “San Francisco,” a strummy gusher about a hookup that might turn into something more. The only time they break this rule is, sadly, with their hit “She’s Kinda Hot,” where singer Luke Hemmings whine-snarls about a smokin’ girlfriend (*sick!*) who’s a bit of a nag (*lame!*). It kind of makes you want to grab the whole band and drown it in the tub. But that’s a rare moment. Usually, these boys have more guts than some bands twice their age. 

LISTEN NOW!

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Trey Anastasio Finds New Paths to Jam Down

The Phish singer-guitarist shows off lessons learned from his time with the Dead

Trey Anastasio *Paper Wheels* Rubber Jungle/ATO

★★★½



The obvious question trailing Trey Anastasio’s latest: How much did he take home from his summer vacation with the Dead? Answer: About what you’d expect from a player whose music has often been shaped by a certain anxiety of influence regarding that other, older jam band. The upshot is business as usual, with a bump.

Check the exquisitely mellow Jerry Garcia Band-style hammock jam at the end of “Flying Machines,” or “Sometime After Sunset” – more proof that Anastasio must wind up as *Shakedown Street* in any “What Dead Album Are You?” quiz. But better yet is “In Rounds,” with a Meters groove and solos that ain’t all guitar: There are funky organ and horn charts, too, with Anastasio’s elastic rhythm showing the same team-player brilliance that shone alongside Phil Lesh in July. The percolating vocal arrangements on “Invisible Knife” echo Sufjan Stevens’ work and show what Anastasio can do as a solo artist – and should do more of – that differs from Phish. But is it possible for this guy to produce an upbeat song without a smirky chant like “Heads removed!/Heads removed!” (“In Rounds”)? “Bounce” is even more shameless – “Too high, too high, too high” goes the reprise. But it’s such an instant arena-boogie classic, it’s tough not to just cave and take one more hit.

WILL HERMES



Rod Stewart

Another Country Capitol

★★½

He writes the songs, but maybe he’d better stick to singing them

Rod Stewart kills it on A\$AP Rocky’s recent “Everyday,” built on a soulful 1970 vocal sample, and he sounded great at a one-off Faces reunion in September. His latest continues his return to songwriting after a decade mostly spent covering standards as a latter-day Sinatra. Rod’s rasp remains remarkable, and he hits a hell of a high note on “Please.” But it would mean more if the song wasn’t so lukewarm. “We Can Win” is a tedious, Mumford & Sons-flavored soccer chant. “Batman Superman Spiderman” is a maudlin lullaby-slash-anthem. It reminds you why Sinatra left the writing to other folks.

WILL HERMES



Avicii

Stories PRMD/Island

★★

Swedish EDM superstar can’t quite pull off a pop takeover

Avicii is one of the planet’s most successful DJs, and his country-tinged 2013 smash, *True*, showed that he aspires to the craft of fellow Swedes like Max Martin. But he lacks the chops to transform the cliché – which he never has trouble locating – into the classic. “Waiting for Love” counts off the days of the week against a Eurovision oompah beat; “True Believer” is pop-house piffle with Chris Martin on the chorus. The weirdest tracks are best, like the pickup-truck banger “Trouble.” It’s hardly Taylor Swift, but it should spur some watercooler talk in Nashville. Too bad *Stories* brings so little to the EDM conversation.

WILL HERMES



Mac Miller

GO:OD AM Warner Bros./Remember Music



Ex-party rapper gets serious, but has trouble finding a new, sober voice

Mac Miller emerged in 2011 like a weed-ed frat frosh looking for the best party, and came out of 2013 like a depressive college-radio MC laboring over his best rhymes. Now, as the 23-year-old says on his third studio LP, it's time to "man up." Miller owns up to addiction issues on songs like "Weekend" – but while *GO:OD AM* is his most mature work, it's not necessarily his most entertaining. Without the lure of parties or the agoraphobic agony of drugs, Miller has turned into the most boring type of major-label rapper: a J. Cole or Big Sean disciple, habitually counting his many blessings. Beyond the vivid OD vision of "Perfect Circle/God Speed," Miller's rehab tales don't have the gut-wrenching power of great 12-stepper rap like Eminem's *Recovery* or Macklemore's "Starting Over." The "brand-new me" is still finding his footing.

CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Patty Griffin

Servant of Love PGM



Singer-songwriter works jazz and blues threads into her roots-rock weave

When Jimmie Rodgers and Bob Wills combined rural mountain music with blues and jazz, it was a great idea, and the magnificent *Servant of Love* is the latest iteration of this American melting-pot impulse. Yet Patty Griffin's influences are broader; alongside Ephraim Owens' trumpet (see "Gunpowder" and the title track) are kalimba patterns and drones charting deep folk blues with North African inflections ("Good and Gone," "Everything's Changed"). "250,000 Miles," a sketch about the loss of a daughter, is set in a desert, echoing the fiction of Paul Bowles, with Griffin's remarkable guitar work and haunting backing vocals by Shawn Colvin. The stylistic mix recalls territory Griffin has explored before, notably in Robert Plant's revived Band of Joy project in 2010, but it's never felt so much like personal vernacular.

WILL HERMES

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Update: Pop

Selena, Janet, Judith: Three Paths to Pop Enlightenment

SELF-HELP, POP MUSIC STYLE: "I've lived through my mistakes," **Janet Jackson** intones at the start of *Unbreakable*, her first album in seven years. "It's just a part of growing," **Selena Gomez** kicks off her second solo LP, *Revival*, in a nearly identical place, talking about diving into the future, like life is one big infinity pool: "I'm reborn in every moment, so who knows what I'll become?"

Their albums could be different stages in a pop-reincarnation cycle, and these two seekers have more in common than you might think. Both went pro by age seven, showed up in TV series around their 10th birthdays, and struggled to take control of their music as they came into their own. They fill their albums with confessions, come-ons and rallying cries about liberating the body and spirit (Jackson's out to save the world; Gomez will settle for something more personal). Maybe they really are just at different steps along a continuum: Gomez at 23 capturing attention on her own terms for the first time, Jackson at 49 trying to figure out how to hold on to the attention she was born into.

The ballads on Gomez's *Revival* are all killers, just one of its many compelling surprises. It's among the first albums designed for the pop world Taylor Swift has created—that is, the songs gain voltage from a canny play with the singer's celebrity, letting a tabloid target turn the tables. Is the whistle in the pointedly awesome "Kill Em With Kindness" supposed to sound like the hook from ex-boyfriend Justin Bieber's "What Do You Mean?" And the guy in "Sober" who isn't, but has love that's just too good to leave—who's that, exactly? Gomez works all this like a fan dance, where the flashes of emotion and sexuality make you feel you're hearing something raw, whether you are or not.

Jackson mastered that dance long ago. *Unbreakable* is full of grooves that develop slowly, beats that change up like lovers switching positions, and keyboards that work subtle hot-



Selena Gomez *Revival*

★★★★

Janet Jackson *Unbreakable*

★★★★½

Judith Hill *Back in Time* ★★★

tub-time-machine tricks, blurring the lines between the Eighties and right now. It's gloriously out of step with current pop convention, which calls for insistent, wall-to-wall micro-hooks ready-made to be dropped into DJ sets. By comparison, Jackson has made a Kate Bush record.

The debut from another seeker, **Judith Hill**, is even more of a throwback: *Back in Time* throbs with Prince-produced Seventies funk and cosmic ballads. Hill is a former *Voice* contestant who was tapped by Michael Jackson as a background singer. The opening cut name-checks CeeLo Green, then invokes Malcolm X. It's strange and bracing—the politics are as real as the singing. Hill, at 31, marks another step in the continuum: What's all this attention really worth, anyway?

JOE LEVY



Gomez



Joanna Newsom

Divers Drag City

★★★★

California singer-songwriter channels Joni Mitchell, hip-hop

"We mean to stop, in increments, but can't commit/We post and sit, in impotence," Joanna Newsom spits on "Leaving the City," which morphs between harp-led Renaissance dance and social-media-dissing, Mellotron-amped rap rock. Her first LP in five years distills the idea sprawl of her past two albums for a brilliantly intricate set nearer her folksy 2004 debut, *The Milk-Eyed Mender*. Still a total original, she remains besotted with history and wordplay, but with emotions magnified. See "The Things I Say," which imagines Joni Mitchell's *Blue* as antebellum parlor music. It's a musketball to the heart.

WILL HERMES



Thunderbitch

Thunderbitch

Blackfootwhitefoot/ATO ★★★★★½

Alabama Shakes singer cuts loose on a raucous, fun side LP

Thunderbitch is Alabama Shakes' Brittany Howard on a garage-rock spree with some Nashville buddies, bringing out the New York Dolls strut that's always lingered around the edges of the Shakes' roughed-up Southern rock and soul. Howard yowls about how she's a wild child who just doesn't care, even as the craft on songs like "Leather Jacket" and "Closer" suggests she cares quite a bit. But it's the looser the better here. The surf stomp of "Eastside Party" makes you want to immediately move to the Eastside—which Eastside? Any Eastside!—as soon as you can burn your side of town down and hit the road.

JON DOLAN

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By Peter Travers

How They Got the Story

It's 'Boston Globe' vs. Catholic Church in the best film about reporting since 'All the President's Men'

Spotlight

Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams

Directed by Tom McCarthy

★★★★

THERE'S NO HIGHER COMPLIMENT to pay this steadily riveting, quietly devastating take on investigative journalism than to say *Spotlight* gets it right. So did the Spotlight team on *The Boston Globe* when, in 2002, it published nearly 600 articles on child sex-abuse allegations against Catholic priests and the church cover-ups that followed. The team won a Pulitzer for its scalding exposé. And right now the film is the predictive favorite to win the Best Picture Oscar. But awards are merely icing on a cake whose candles glow in tribute to long-form print journalism, now fading in the digital fog of budget cuts, reduced resources and click-bait news cycles.

Bravo to director Tom McCarthy (*The Station Agent*, *Win Win*, *The Visitor*), who wrote the richly detailed script with Josh Singer (*The Fifth Estate*). There's not an ounce of Hollywood bullshit in it. Our eyes and ears are the Spotlight team, played by exceptional actors who could not be better or more fully committed.

Michael Keaton is in peak form as Spotlight editor Walter "Robby" Robinson, a stickler who is tough on reporters Michael Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo) and Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams) and researcher Matt Carroll (Brian d'Arcy James). Robinson is skeptical that his newspaper, whose readers and staffers are largely Irish-Cath-



McAdams, Ruffalo, James, Keaton, Slattery (from left)

lic, can tackle the Boston Archdiocese. Caution also guides *Globe* deputy managing editor Ben Bradlee Jr. (John Slattery), whose father, *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee, risked his job on the Watergate coverage.

The kick in the ass for Spotlight comes from an outsider: Marty Baron (a terrific Liev Schreiber), the paper's new top editor, a Floridian and the first Jew to call the shots at the *Globe*. Baron rightfull-

ly suspects a conspiracy and turns Spotlight loose. McCarthy and camera wizard Masanobu Takayanagi track the grinding work of real reporting. As Carroll, the excellent James digs into sealed records of priests whose crimes are swept aside. Political, social and legal systems are found complicit, including plaintiffs' lawyer Eric MacLeish (Billy Crudup) and Cardinal Bernard Law (Len Cariou). Mc-

Adams, sharp and sympathetic, shows us how Pfeiffer draws out details from victims whose childhoods meant sucking the dick of a priest who says he's had a bad day. And Ruffalo is a marvel of purpose as Rezendes hounds attorney Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci) for access to survivors of sex abuse.

It's these survivors who give *Spotlight* its beating heart. Roiling emotions are also felt among reporters who desperately want to get the story right and just as desperately want to get it first. That tension makes for an insanely gripping high-wire act and the year's most thrilling detective story. These reporters are jittery obsessives who put their lives on hold for a story they believe in. Do they get off on it? You bet. They're hardcore guardians of an endangered galaxy. And heroes, in my book. At times, it's hard not to choke up, but *Spotlight* refuses to wallow in nostalgia. This landmark film takes a clear-eyed look at the digital future and honors the one constant that journalism needs to stay alive and relevant: a fighting spirit.

A Ghost Tale with a Kinky Twist

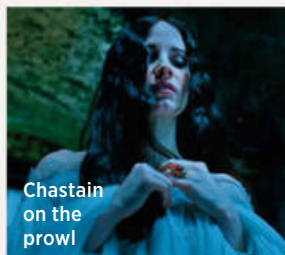
Crimson Peak

Jessica Chastain

Directed by Guillermo del Toro

★★½

Guillermo del Toro doesn't merely direct movies. He paints them, dreams them, shapes them into private fantasies. Prep for chills as soon as British baronet Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston) seduces the virginal Edith (Mia Wasikowska) and whisks her off, circa 1900, to his haunted family castle in England, ruled by Thomas' twisted sister, Lucile



Chastain on the prowl

(a deliciously demented Jessica Chastain). Too much? Of course. But watching del Toro explode this Gothic romance with beauty and terror is part of the fun.

TV News Gets Grilled

Truth

Cate Blanchett, Robert Redford

Directed by James Vanderbilt

★★★

THIS PROBING LOOK AT TV news is, unlike *Spotlight*, a trip into the dark side of journalism. CBS producer Mary Mapes (Cate Blanchett) climbs a slippery slope when she organizes a segment for *60 Minutes II*, with CBS News anchor Dan Rather (Robert Redford) at the helm, suggesting that a young George W. Bush pulled strings in 1968 to dodge Vietnam by taking Texas Air National Guard pilot training.

Juicy stuff, especially in light of the Swift-boat scandal that tainted John Kerry's campaign. Bush-bashing could shift the election. Mapes feels confident thanks to her research team, including Lt. Col. Roger Charles (Dennis Quaid), journalism prof Lucy Scott (Elisabeth Moss) and



Blanchett and Redford strategize.

freelancer Mike Smith (Tommy Lee Jones). But the team relies heavily on supporting documents reportedly written in 1972 and 1973 by Bush's commander, the late Lt. Col. Jerry B. Killian, that label Bush a no-show. When the Killian documents are discredited, Mapes is fired and Rather is sent into retirement.

End of story. Or it would be if Mapes hadn't written a 2005 book, *Truth and Duty: The Press, the President, and the Privilege of Power*, an apologia of sorts. And if screenwriter James Vanderbilt (*Zo-*

diac), making a rattling-good directorial debut, hadn't seen the book as a basis for a hell-raiser of a movie.

That it is. Blanchett burns on a high flame, and Redford finds the wounded dignity in Rather. But not enough to give the Mapes team a pass. The real story here is how the CBS bosses, tasked to entertain and win ratings, pushed to get the piece aired before it was ready and then pushed to throw Mapes and Rather under the bus. It's not a pretty picture, but it gives this movie the harsh ring of truth. **B+**

Bill Murray, 'Nuff Said

Rock the Kasbah

Bill Murray, Bruce Willis

Directed by Barry Levinson

★★½

IF YOU HAVE A COMEDY-drama about a rock manager at the last stages of a dismal career – he says he discovered Madonna (he didn't) and books his last client (a game Zoëy Deschanel) on a USO tour of Afghanistan – you need to find exactly the right actor to play him. Director Barry Levinson and screenwriter Mitch Glazer lucked out getting Bill Murray to play Richie Lanz, a loser who makes losing hilarious. Murray just kills



Murray turns promoter in Afghanistan.

it. *Rock the Kasbah* goes fierce to quietly touching and back to funny again. Bruce Willis shows up as a gun-toting mercenary. And there's Kate Hudson as a hooker working the Kabul circuit. And how about Leem Lubany as a Pashtun teen girl tied to strict Muslim

rules of conduct. When Richie books her on *Afghan Star*, a version of *American Idol*, there are death threats. Some of this really happened. But don't get bogged down in details. Just roll with Murray, an actor so damn good you'll follow him anywhere. **B+**

Trapped in a Private Hell

Room

Brie Larson, Jacob Tremblay

Directed by Lenny Abrahamson

★★★★½

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING unique and unforgettable? *Room* is it. Based on a 2010 novel by Emma Donoghue, who wrote the screenplay, *Room* puts us up close and personal with Joy (Brie Larson) and her five-year-old son, Jack (Jacob Tremblay). They play games, cook meals and bond with genuine affection. It sounds like a sweet dose of Disney.

No way. Joy and Jack are prisoners, held captive in a



Larson and Tremblay in crisis

soundproof garden shed by Old Nick (Sean Bridgers), a kidnapper who rapes Joy nightly, but gives her a tiny separate room to raise the son he impregnated her with. Jack hears the muffled sex sounds at night, but accepts the aberrant as normal.

And you believe it. Director Lenny Abrahamson (*Frank*) creates almost unbearable tension. There is a release (I won't say how) and a trip to the outside to see Joy's parents (William H. Macy and Joan Allen).

But *Room* deserves to be seen unspoiled. All you need to know is that the performances of Larson and Tremblay will blow you away. Tremblay is a child actor incapable of a false move. And Larson, so good in *Short Term 12*, is magnificent, finding a way into Joy's bruised psyche that tears at your heart. OK, *Room* is a small movie, but its impact is enormous. **A-**

THE WEEKND

[Cont. from 45] beginning of his mainstream conquest. He followed that with “Earned It,” from the *50 Shades of Grey* soundtrack, a slinky BDSM slow-jam that sounded like nothing else on pop radio and rode to Number Three on the charts. Then he went into the studio with Martin to craft some hits of his own.

“His whole operation is just genius,” Tesfaye says of the producer. “I was told he doesn’t do this very much, but he would actually sit on the floor with us and come up with ideas. I feel like usually he’ll collaborate, but he’s not as passionate or as hands-on. I felt superhonored, you know? It was some real Michael-and-Quincy, John Lennon-and-Paul McCartney stuff.”

Martin ended up co-producing three songs on the album: “Can’t Feel My Face,” “Shameless” and the forthcoming single “In the Night,” another Jackson homage that could become the Weeknd’s biggest hit yet. “If it works, it’s going to be huge,” Tesfaye says. “It’s like that load that you’re trying to hold in – I’m just waiting for the money shot.”

The Weeknd’s mixtapes, and even *Kiss Land* to an extent, relied a lot on atmosphere and mood, their hooks cloaked in a woozy codeine haze. *Beauty Behind the Madness* is more like a cocaine bump: shorter, tighter, more energetic. “It’s all about songs for me right now,” he says. “The production can be cool and crazy-sounding, but that’s just special effects. If you can’t strip it down and play it on piano, it’s not a good song.” He cites Radiohead as an example: “I love Radiohead, they’re one of the greatest of all time. But can you break down their songs and play them on piano? Maybe not.”

To Tesfaye, writing pop songs is a whole lot harder than writing cool songs. “Some people are like, ‘Oh, yeah, just sell out and do pop music.’ So *you* fucking do it, then! It’s not easy. Can I be honest with you? What all these kids are doing right now? I could do that in my sleep. I listen to it, and it doesn’t test me at all. I could make a girl go like this” – he does a little shimmy-dance – “with a beat. It’s very easy. I did it so much I can’t do it anymore. But pop music? That shit’s hard, dude.”

THREE DAYS LATER, TESFAYE IS across the country at Studio 8H in NBC’s Rockefeller Center, at a rehearsal for *Saturday Night Live*. Across the room, host Amy Schumer is posing on a chaise lounge in a black-lace Eighties Madonna dress. Tesfaye is soundchecking the same two songs he always does: “Can’t Feel My Face” and “The Hills.” *SNL* wanted him to do “In the Night” instead, but it’s a tough song to sing live, and he didn’t feel ready. Even he can recognize his limitations: “I’m not known as the greatest singer right now,” Tesfaye says, “but I’m

also not known as the guy who fucking sucks, you know?”

After the camera-blocking, a producer comes over to ask Tesfaye’s team if he’ll shoot a couple of promos with Schumer and cast member Kate McKinnon. At first they decline, but Tesfaye knows what a big deal *SNL* is, so he agrees. He looks nervous as he takes his mark and stares at the cue cards. “Are you ready?” Schumer teases. “It’s not easy...”

They do a few takes, Tesfaye playing the straight man while Schumer and McKinnon improvise wackily. He’s funny – just the right amount of deadpan. When he asks about a typo on one of the cue cards, Schumer playfully smacks his shoulder: “Well, look who can read!” The director says they have it, and Schumer turns and gives Tesfaye a hug: “You were so good!” An embarrassed Tesfaye smiles, makes two finger-guns and blows his brains out.

At the broadcast Saturday night, Tesfaye is joined by surprise guest Nicki Minaj, who raps on a brand-new remix of “The Hills.” But the highlight for him was meeting Louis C.K., who was “just chilling backstage.” “He was in the middle of a conversation,” Tesfaye says, “and I was like, ‘I don’t know if I’m ever gonna see you again, so in case I don’t, I just want to tell you how much I admire your work.’ I don’t think he recognized who I was, but he was supersweet.”

Tesfaye has had lots of these idol encounters lately. There was the time he met Leonardo DiCaprio at an L.A. club. “I don’t get star-struck, but I get star-struck when I see someone like that. Our tables were beside each other, and the owner of the club knew how important he was to me, so he introduced me.”

Or the time he met the Band’s Robbie Robertson at Canada’s Walk of Fame. “Robbie’s from Scarborough too, actually. I met him and Peter Dinklage together – those guys know how to party. I’m an avid film-watcher. Growing up, I loved anything Scorsese and De Niro, and Robbie’s been Scorsese’s friend for years, and consulted on Scorsese’s music. So he’d tell me stories about them. I live for these moments.” And then, most charmingly, there’s the time he simply *overheard* a conversation between LL Cool J and Denzel Washington at an Oscar party. “That’s when I was like, ‘You know what? I think I fuckin’ made it, dude.’”

At 3 a.m., after the *SNL* afterparty, Tesfaye will board a private jet that will take him to Austin for his headlining slot at ACL fest – his last festival of the year before he shuts down to prep for his own tour. There will be fireworks and a pyro display during “The Hills,” and 30,000 people singing along to “Can’t Feel My Face.” During “Often,” he’ll change the hook to say, “Ask how many times I come to Texas/I say Austin!” and then after-

ward, he’ll run offstage into a waiting SUV and enjoy a police-motorcycle escort on the way back to his hotel.

It’s a long way from his first big festival gig, in 2012 at Coachella. “Coachella was the first show I did in the States, and I hated my performance,” he says. “I was scared shitless. I got offstage and thought I did pretty good, then I watched the tape, and it was a nightmare. I saw all the comments, and I wanted to kill myself. I remember telling my agent, ‘You need to book me as many shows as possible. That guy onstage is not a star. That’s not a legend.’”

So Tesfaye got to work. He took some dance lessons, trying to build confidence and learn how to perform. And he played lots of shows. “I was performing my ass off,” he says. “My touring was booming. Everybody was confused – I don’t have a hit song, and I’m doing two nights at Radio City? I’m not saying I’m Beyoncé, but I feel like I went after it and nailed it.”

When it came down to it, Tesfaye was driven by fear. “I think the worst thing anyone can say about an artist is, ‘He could have been great,’” he says. “I was always scared of being that guy where it’s like, ‘He could have been big. He could have been a star.’ I was afraid I’d see somebody else up there and be like, ‘You’re trying to tell me they’re better than me? Why? Because they’ve got a couple of smash records? I can do smashes. I could figure it out.’”

“And to be honest with you, it’s been, what, a couple of years now? And it feels great. I feel great.”

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THE PSYCHEDELIC WARRIOR

[Cont. from 49] former cocktail waitress with whom he already had two daughters, and now has another. “She lets me do whatever I do. That’s how we get along well. She doesn’t fuck with me. A prenp? Of course. I’m ridiculous and dumb, but I’m not stupid.” Then he’s thinking about his kids for a moment. “You know what? Porn and strip clubs seem so different to me now. They’re not out. But they just don’t seem the same. Having kids just ruined it.”

Sometimes, Rogan will flesh out his story by saying that, early on, being moved around from place to place, he never felt like he fit in. He didn’t get picked on and bullied so much as he was ignored or dismissed. He developed this odd sense that he was just another sad sack who didn’t have anything going for him. He had friends, even had girlfriends, but he felt neither here nor there. “I was terrified of being a loser,” he says. “Superterrified of being someone who people just go, ‘Oh, look at that fucking loser.’ You know? I was always thinking that the other kids were going to turn on me at any moment. I was weird. I just fucking drifted.”

In Joe’s 15th year, a school tough got him in a headlock in the locker room, not hurting him, really, but humiliating him to the core. A sudden determination to never experience that again led him to take up martial arts, where he first saw that he did have talents, was maybe not a loser, could stand up for himself. It was life-altering, and from there, one thing led to another.

And then there’s his father, the cop, who he really would rather not discuss.

“All I remember of my dad,” he says, “are these brief, violent flashes of domestic violence. And when I was five, I had a fight with one of my cousins – punched him in the face over something stupid – and his mother was screaming to my parents, ‘Your son’s a little monster. He punched my kid in the face!’ My dad pulled me aside and I told him the truth of what happened. He said, ‘Did you cry?’ I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Good, don’t ever cry.’ I mean, he was happy that I punched my cousin. But I don’t want to complain about my childhood. Nothing bad ever really happened to me. It was just confusing, you know? He was just a very violent, scary guy. After the split, we moved to San Francisco and that was it. Never heard from him again.”

As for his father, Joseph, now a retired cop still living in New Jersey, he won’t respond directly to the allegations. All he will say is, “I don’t talk about people the way they talk about me. That’s not in my DNA. What’s gone is gone.”

THESE DAYS, THE MAIN DRIVER of Rogan’s “personal evolution,” as he calls it, is his podcast, which he records inside a small office in a nondescript industrial park. It’s dimly lit, with

mug shots on one wall, most notably of Jimi Hendrix. Brian Redban is here today, looking kind of disheveled, as well as comedian Nick DiPaolo, a mostly right-leaning longtime Rogan pal. Before the show begins, Rogan sparks up a joint, takes a hit, passes it to Redban and says, “A guy I was friends with, all he wanted to talk about was how he was the finest grower in all of L.A., always stroking his cock in front of you. Like, come on. These days, everyone’s got good weed, so strong I almost don’t want the best. I’d like to relax a little, Jesus fucking Christ. I don’t have to get blasted off into the center of my childhood on the first two hits.”

And, in fact, Rogan takes only one hit, while Redban takes three and DiPaolo takes none. “I haven’t smoked a joint in 25 years,” DiPaolo says. And Rogan says, “It’s good for you, Nick. I’m telling you.”

Then, over the next few hours, they talk about El Chapo’s great Mexican-jail escape. “Gotta give props where they are due,” Rogan says. “He executed that like a goddamn Clint Eastwood movie! How the fuck do you not respect that?” Liberia: “There’s an area where people just shit on the road. The shitway.” Moderation: “I have, like, a night a week where I just eat like a fucking slob in front of the TV.” Late-night cooking: “My favorite thing is grilling meat in my underwear. I want to protect my shaft and balls at the very least.” Cat-shit coffee: “This animal called the civet eats the coffee beans and then shits them out.... The digestive enzymes are juice in the cat’s stomach that make it a smoother, smoother coffee.” And so on. A real scattershot assemblage, near the end of which Rogan says, “It just seems like there’s more wackiness going on right now in the world than any time I could ever remember. Does it seem like that? Like more hypocrisy, more contradiction, more chaos.”

Yes, of course. On the other hand, how much of that could just be a reflection of Rogan’s own picking and choosing and not so much a truth about the world – which has always been filled with hypocrisy, contradiction and chaos – as it is a truth about him?

“When I first met you,” DiPaolo says later on, “you were fucking nuts.”

“No, I was still fighting,” Rogan says. “Yeah, I mean, that was just out of fear, I’m sure. When you grow up with violence, you’re programmed to respond and react quickly. [Kids like this] develop this hair-trigger reaction to things. Overreact. Make mistakes they can’t rebound from. And a lot of it is because of the actual programming that occurs when they’re in the womb, even. When their mother is experiencing violence from the father, it literally changes their genes in the womb.”

They don’t linger on the point, however. It’s time to wrap up the podcast and move on to other matters. Caitlyn Jenner, for in-

stance, which don’t get Rogan started, because he won’t stop.

He’s fine with her being transgender and all. He goes on, “I’ll call her a woman if she wants to be a woman. I’ll call you whatever you want. I don’t care. But you can’t tell me she’s beautiful and that because I disagree I’m a piece of shit.... I mean, I don’t understand the mindset of an ultramarathon runner, or an asexual person, or a person who wants to have sex with animals – by the way, I’m not connecting zoophilia to transgender people. What I’m saying is, I don’t give a fuck. And I think it’s kinda ridiculous that everybody is forcing the fact that she’s beautiful down everybody’s throat. And that heroic thing is just outrageous. These are vampires of attention. The patriarch of this family becomes a woman and there’s virtually no conversation about the fact that she killed someone while driving. There’s no talk of that. That’s been dissolved.” (Since this interview, the L.A. district attorney’s office decided not to bring charges against Jenner.) Rogan pauses. Finally, he says, “I mean, there’s a lot of nutty shit with this, but ultimately, you know, for the human race, I think this is all for the good.”

LATER THAT DAY, HE GRUMBLES and roars his way to Pasadena in his ’65 Corvette, to a famous comedy club called the Ice House, where he has a gig. He mills around in the parking lot, waiting to go on. His dad is still on his mind and he has a few more things to say.

“Look,” he says, “I don’t want to try to figure out what went wrong. I don’t hate the guy, I don’t want to beat his ass. I just don’t want to be involved with him, and I don’t want to talk to him. He was very nice to me, loved me. But he was super-, super-violent, and he would have turned me into a fucking psychopath.”

Rogan seems sure about this, like there’s no doubt in his mind, which maybe explains so much about why he’s stitched everything together the way he has: the UFC gig, the testosterone and HGH injections, his float tank and freezers full of self-delivered meat, his DMT trips to the portal of souls, the taking of one hit off the joint instead of the two that’d rocket him back into childhood, all those guests on his podcast, filling his feverish, hopeful mind with all kinds of things. It’s where life has come into play, stacking one thing up against another like into a fortress or a wall.

He turns to go inside, and pretty soon the crowd is laughing at bits about Texans, Scientology, Santa Claus and how “you eat a pot cookie and think about somebody you fingered when you were 14, and I’m sorry, OK? Jesus Christ, we were kids.” A few of the transitions are shaky, some of the jokes a little flat. Not to worry. He’s doing better than anyone might have expected, and the alternatives could have been far worse.

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RS 665 SEPTEMBER 16TH, 1993

Meet the New Janet

One day on the set of her 1993 movie *Poetic Justice*, Janet Jackson was getting out of the shower in her dressing room when she got a glimpse of herself in the mirror. "My long braids were covering my chest," she said. "I thought, 'What a cool shot that would make.'" Working with photographer Patrick Demarchelier on what would become her most famous ROLLING STONE cover, she tried to bring the idea to life, with one crucial difference: The hands of her husband, Rene Elizondo, took the place of her braids. The image would become a turning point for Jackson, who had been known for her buttoned-up military-style outfits. "Everyone read deeply into it," she said. "I just thought it was a cool shot."

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Reviewed in the Issue

Nirvana

In Utero DGC



"This is the way Kurt Cobain spells success: s-u-c-k-s-e-g-g-s. Never in the history of rock & roll overnight sensations has an artist, with the possible exception of John Lennon, been so emotionally overwhelmed by his sudden good fortune, despised it with such devilish vigor and exorcised his discontent on record with such bristling, bull's-eye candor."

Smashing Pumpkins

Siamese Dream Virgin



"While *Gish* was more subtle about its influences, *Siamese Dream* announces them.

Solos by [Billy] Corgan and James Iha are the stuff suburban Seventies backyard parties were made of – Nugent and Hendrix all the way! But in the Pumpkins' mix, the bong-sucking riffs prove intricate rather than wanky."

Cypress Hill

Black Sunday

Ruffhouse/Columbia



"Cypress carry an 'alternative' crowd without alienating hardcore hip-hoppers, sampling

Suicidal Tendencies while keeping the beats raw. Still, it's the Cypress combo of stark grooves and cinematic gangsta fairy tales that allows them to rule the streets, a formula not messed with on *Black Sunday*."

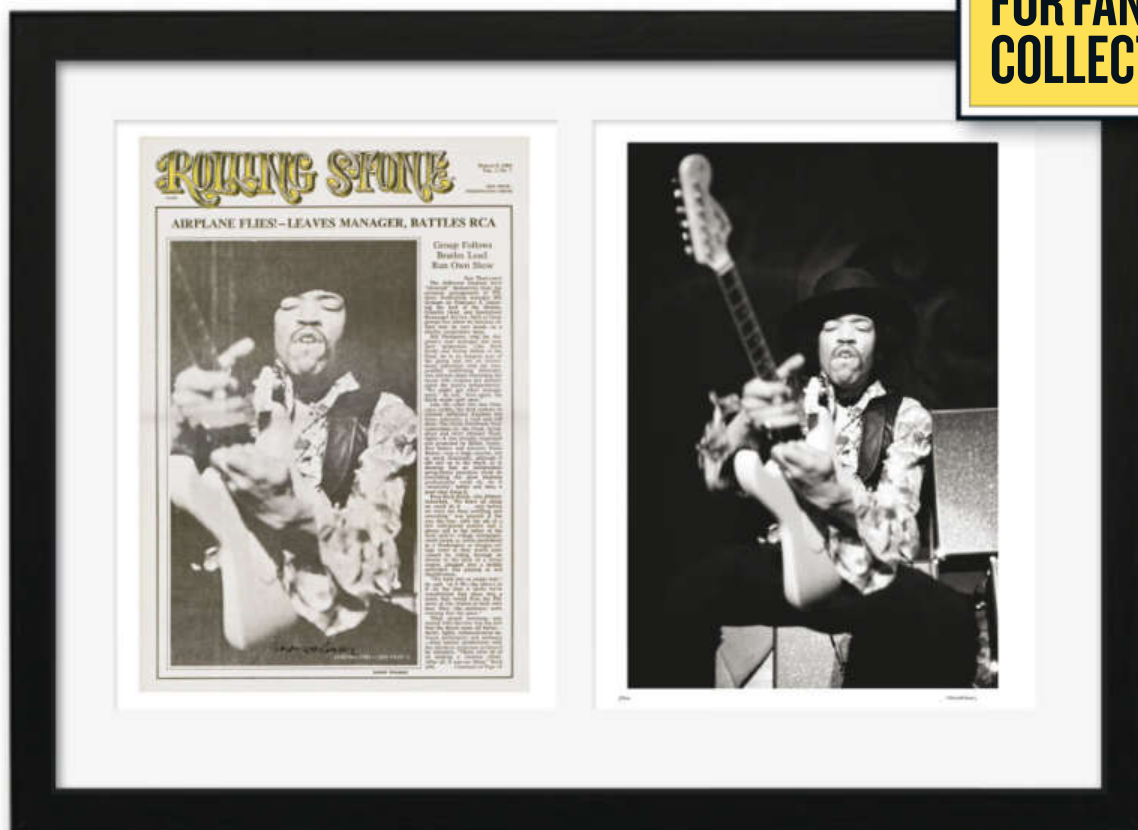
1993: On the Charts

Week of September 18th

- 1 "Can't Help Falling in Love" UB40 Virgin
- 2 "Dreamlover" Mariah Carey Columbia
- 3 "Whoop! (There It Is)" Tag Team Life
- 4 "Runaway Train" Soul Asylum Columbia
- 5 "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)" The Proclaimers Chrysalis
- 6 "If" Janet Jackson Virgin
- 7 "Lately" Jodeci Uptown/MCA
- 8 "If I Had No Loot" Tony Toni Toné Wing
- 9 "Slam" Onyx JMJ/Ral
- 10 "Right Here/Human Nature" SWV RCA

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